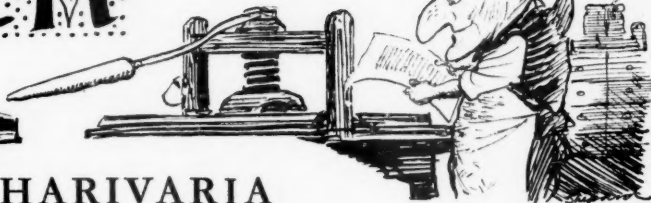




## CHARIVARIA



WHEN Mr. Khrushchev told correspondents at the Egyptian Embassy that the British Lion does not frighten anyone any more he must have forgotten the people who have to buy things with it stamped on them.

THE Navy's decision to lay up its only two remaining midget submarines



seems a puzzling step towards its ultimate emergence as a midget navy.

SIR JOHN HUNT, looking around for fresh hills to conquer, has asked the Russians for permission to try to climb some of the Caucasian peaks, and suggests that when that range is exhausted it might be possible for someone to have a go at one of the mountains on the moon. Again, presumably, with Russian permission.

PERHAPS it is with this in mind that the British Council has sent an invitation to Moscow for three hundred Russian students to come and spend a few weeks at British universities; though it is hard to believe that this ingenious plan will, in fact, slow up Russian research to any marked degree.

On the other hand a spokesman of the Aetherius Society (the Spiritual Mission of the Flying Saucers) reveals that if the Russians try to go to the moon, beings from other planets will draw a field of force about it to stop them. It's

difficult to imagine what the earth has done to deserve this.

THE estimate that American visitors will spend up to £74 a day at the proposed hotel in Park Lane does seem large, but Mr. F. H. Lawton, describing it as over-optimistic about the amount of money Americans spend in hotels, is ignoring the possibility that it is only rather pessimistic about the Government's anti-inflationary measures.

A SLIGHTLY more welcome note on inflation, at least for those who are weary of hearing Front Benchers blaming it on each other, is that the Professor of Statistics at London University says



that there is no obvious reason why the steady and persistent rise in prices since 1954 should have started at all.

ACCORDING to a lecturer the businessman's wife can help to preserve her husband's health and reduce the dangers of heart disease by being "willing to discuss some incredibly dull subject which is an obsession." Like his health and the dangers of heart disease.

PERHAPS the Opposition, baffled in their search for defects in the Government's plans for cheaper and easier telephone calls, would do best simply to damn the whole thing outright on the grounds that anything *must* be wrong that makes it easier for one man to telephone another.

In odd contrast to this plan to save millions by increased mechanization, about £10,000 annually is being saved by hand-delivery of Yorkshire Electricity Board bills. Further savings will



be achieved when the messenger follows them up with a shout of "Or else!" through the letter-box.

MR. CARL OECHSLE, the American deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce, now says that there's nothing wrong with America that a million salesmen couldn't cure, adding "Why anybody is nervous is beyond me." That's why.

A RUGGER-WRITER's remark that "this fetish for open play can be carried to excess" strikes a new note, but perhaps he is really a conservative who



believes that if he swings the pendulum about enough nobody will be able to settle down to tampering with the rules.

## Presentation Party Piece

WITH the debs so much plebbier  
And the plebs so much debbier  
The Lord Chamberlain's idea  
Makes things a lot tidier.

## Dial DESpond 8000

*The desperately unhappy can now obtain spiritual comfort by dialling MAN 9000. PUNCH welcomes this admirable service and suggests another almost equally desirable.*

"HELLO. DESpond 8000?"  
"Yes. Anti-Euphoria Society."

"Look, I'm frightfully sorry to trouble you, old man, but my wife keeps nagging me to give you a tinkle, silly girl. Been complaining about my cheerfulness first thing every morning. Whistling. Laughing at the headlines and all that. Life's too short, I keep telling her—"

"Ah yes, sir. Any complaints from the neighbours?"

"Why, yes. That old grousepot next door—"

"Calls you a hearty type. Resents that slap on the back on the way to the station."

"Absolutely. How did you guess?"

"Typical case, sir. I think we can help you."

"But I don't think I need help. I like being the way I am. If more of us went around moaning less and trying to make the best of things, the world—"

"But would it, sir? Perhaps you

would care to submit yourself to our formal questionnaire. First, are you a cigarette smoker?"

"My dear chap, don't give me that corny old routine."

"The medical evidence is plain, sir."

"Look here. If I have to give up my forty a day life wouldn't—"

"I'm coming to that, sir. Next, were you in the least bit perturbed by the recent fall-out at Windscale?"

"Well, yes, but wasn't there something about the level not being much above the normal safety point?"

"That isn't strictly so, sir. It rather leads into my third question about world strontium 90, especially with this renewed threat of more and bigger H-bomb tests. Have you given much thought to that?"

"I'll counter that with my usual one about the greater risk these days of being killed crossing the road."

"Check. That—the whole business of road carnage—is actually our question number ten, but we'll take it now. Do you—?"

"Now look here. If we begin to worry about all these things—"

"Very well then. What about this galloping inflation and the inexorable rise in the cost of living? What about the sputniks, as a change of subject, and the ever-growing shadow of the Russian colossus? What about—"

"Okay, okay. What do you suggest?"

"Well now, officially we have no particular preference for method. But there's—"

"I say, you're not suggesting—"

"Or of course as yours isn't a very bad case you might just retire into a monastery."

DAVID LANGDON

## Promotion for Zhukov

THEN slowly answered Zhukov from his seat  
Inside the small container, taking off  
The morion that concealed his mighty brow  
And for the last time blazoning to the world  
The rounded glory of a warrior's head;  
"Farewell, my friends! I am going a long way  
Less of my own accord than by command  
Of that unspeakable Presidium  
That rules us one and all. Put down with me  
A final vodka to the good old days,  
For I shall soon become a satellite,  
A sort of mechanized Vespasian  
Who sensed the onrush of Divinity—  
Like, yet not like, for he remained in bed.  
But I shall be a wanderer in space  
For ever circling round the circling globe:  
The Thing that sends a Thing that sends a Thing  
By methods which I scarcely understand  
Projects me to my new Avilion—  
Address all letters to the Stratosphere.  
At least it will be something of a change  
To mingle with my so-called friends no more."

So said he, and the inter-stellar bomb  
Went upwards with a most almighty pop  
Less like a swan than the embodiment  
Of some unparalleled catastrophe,  
And those below him mourned "So much for him.  
It may be he will journey to the moon  
Or even farther to the Happy Isles  
And meet with Comrad Stalin whom we knew."  
And then bethought them of an ancient rhyme  
"From the great sweep to the great sweep he goes."  
One doubts if he will ever come again.

EVOE





COFFEE FOR NONE

# She Never Calls Him Sexton

By E. S. TURNER

TRY to picture Sherlock Holmes, at the zenith of his powers, turning himself into an Organization with offices in Berkeley Square, and signing up a long-legged, honey-blond secretary and a breathless brunette receptionist with spike-heeled, transparent plastic court shoes.

Not easy, eh? Yet a fellow practitioner of Holmes, who has done quite as much to make Baker Street renowned, has recently accomplished just that. He is Sexton Blake, who was hounding Nihilists in the 'nineties and is now pursuing treasonous scientists.

The dissolution of the Baker Street monastery came as a sharp shock to Blake's older devotees. For more than sixty years their ascetic hero had kept women at bay; now something had snapped, and here he was running a

seraglio in Berkeley Square. It was plain to see that he had been rejuvenated, for stuffy business-men were beginning to address him as "young man." For one who was verging on pompous middle age when he fell out of a balloon in 1893, who was locked in an iron maiden by His Criminal Majesty King Karl in 1927, and who was trampled by 'Teddy Boys in 1956, Blake has undoubtedly worn well.

So, incidentally, has Tinker. The gamin who joined Blake at about the turn of the century is now introduced to clients as Mr. Edward Carter (not to be confused with the once-ubiquitous Nick). When the last false report of his death appeared in the papers his age was given as twenty-six; thus, while Blake is perhaps ten years younger, Tinker (sorry, Carter) is some ten years

older. Those who expected him to remonstrate with his employer over the introduction of female labour have been proved wrong. There is a bond between men who have been clubbed and chloroformed together down the generations, and who have read each other's obituaries, which is not to be broken by a wayward halter neckline or a pair of spike-heeled shoes, even transparent ones.

That eager young receptionist in Blake's outer office is Marion Lang, who wears the kind of clothes receptionists are wont to wear in Berkeley Square, and Blake finds difficulty in concentrating his thoughts when he uses her telephone. Though not yet inured to the thud of corpses, Marion is beginning to feel her way in that bracing world in which crooks hand out magnesium cigarettes and young men are murdered by female fiends with knitting needles in pleasure boats off Brighton. In emergencies Marion is even allowed to drive the Bentley which has displaced Blake's famous Grey Panther.

But the newcomer who has most aroused the suspicions of Blake's aficionados is the long-legged secretary, Paula Dane, whom he rescued from the grip of crooks when she was a struggling copywriter. At that time she had, and still has, a flat in Lowndes Square, with a baby grand. Blake explained that he could not offer her a big salary, so at present her coat is only a "near-mink." He has increased her usefulness by teaching her judo (whether at Berkeley Square, Lowndes Square or in the flat he still retains in Baker Street we are not told). An apt pupil, Paula has already felled an armed redhead by tossing an unwary crook at her, and knocked out an Italian adventuress with an old-fashioned blow to the jaw.

Sometimes her value to Blake has been fortuitous, as on that day when Blake and Paula were being commanded by a gunman to jump through the hatch of an aeroplane into the North Sea. The wanton wind caught at Paula's skirt and for a second the gunman's eyes wandered; in that second Blake was at his throat.

Blake likes to be seen around with Paula, and she with him. She sits close to him in taxis. They have often had



"Mummy, will the Russians get to Heaven before us?"





*"I've been called up."*

drinks in each other's flats. Once she held his hand for a moment in the inner office, then Blake "gave Paula back her hand" without comment. The only time she appears to have kissed him was just after he had saved her life, and that hardly counts. The two have been on holiday together to Positano (the narrator making it perhaps unnecessarily clear that they occupied separate rooms), but a body washed up on the beach sufficed to keep their thoughts in professional channels.

Clearly, there is something uneasy in the relationship between Blake and Paula. Once, in an hotel in Madrid, after a gang of crooks had been broken up, the heady music of Dark Mambo, wafting up from the ballroom, began to throb deeply and primitively in their ears. Blake smiled and rose. "Do you remember that tune?" he asked. Paula nodded, and even as she nodded the music swelled, quickening in tempo. Then Sexton Blake spoke. "Let's go

downstairs and eat," he said. And they did.

What is it that inhibits both of them? Those familiar with the saga of Sexton Blake have no difficulty in putting their finger on the trouble. It is impossible, they say, for a woman to achieve terms of intimacy with a man whose first name is Sexton. There is no more improbable line of dialogue than "Kiss me, Sexton," unless it is "Kiss me, Sex" or "Kiss me, Sexy." Adventuresses who tried to seduce Blake back in the nineteen-twenties were up against this same difficulty and were forced to retire, beating their flat bosoms in frustration. Nowadays, when Blake telephones Paula in the middle of the night (on business), she answers "Oh, it's you," or perhaps, taking her cue from Mr. Carter, "Hello, chief." No doubt about it: that name Sexton is at once Blake's stumbling-block and his protection.

It is true that young women in America are able to say "Kiss me,

Homer," and even "Not to-night, Gaylord," but Sexton, as they would admit, is something else again. Sometimes a woman surmounts this difficulty by inventing a pet name of her own. The devotees of Blake have stood for much, however, and are not going to have him addressed as "Buster" or "Birdie."

They are watching the new set-up carefully. Paula, as they admit, is doing a splendid job for the Organization. She deserves something better than a near-mink coat, but they will probably be unreasonably suspicious when she gets it.

“ANNUAL TOLPUDDLE  
MARTYRS DEMONSTRATION  
This event is  
CANCELLED

owing to the threatened bus strike.”  
*Announcement in Bournemouth Daily Echo*

# America Day by Day

By P. G. WODEHOUSE

THE verdict of both critics and public seems to be that *West Side Story*, produced recently at the Winter Garden Theatre, has everything that makes a musical comedy a success these days. It deals with the activities of two rival gangs of juvenile delinquents, who murder one another briskly from the opening chorus. Towards the middle of act one there is a big concerted number in the course of which three of the cast die of knife wounds, and just before the final curtain someone rubs out the hero with, if memory serves me rightly, a blunt instrument.

Great stuff, of course, and no wonder New York's pleasure seekers are paying the equivalent of three pounds for seats, but one does wish sometimes that one could see an occasional *mélange* of fun and music where more of the performers stayed alive for the duration. You fellows are too young to remember, but when I was a prominent Edwardian stage-door Johnny they often used to put on musical comedies where it was the rarest thing in the world to find yourself confronted with a corpse. You started with fifteen principals and a chorus of forty-five, and at eleven o'clock there they all still were, as fit as fiddles and dancing about all over the place like billy-o. Those were the days.



The trend in television Westerns, on the other hand, is toward sweetness and light. "Adult Westerns," they call them, an adult Western, broadly speaking, being one where gun-play is kept down to a minimum and the good guy does not kill the bad guy but tries to understand him. The sheriff who used to start the conversational ball rolling with some such remark as "Best say your prayers, Hank Spivis, 'cos Ah'm gonna drill yuh like a dawg" is out of vogue. To-day he leads his man to the office couch and psychoanalyses him. It turns out in the end that the reason why Hank rustles cattle and shoots up the Malemute saloon on Saturday nights is that, when he was three, his nurse took away his all-day sucker, and we fade out on a medium shot of him, a reformed character in a morning coat and a top hat, selling his life story to a motion picture studio for two hundred thousand dollars. Indians, too, rarely bite the dust nowadays on the television screen. They have a quiet talk with the commandant of U.S. Cavalry at the fort ("Is your scalping really necessary?") as the result of which they toddle off and go into the hay, corn and feed business and do well.

The mystery, which has puzzled so many, of where all these darned novels come from is partially solved by an interview in one of the papers with a Mrs. Handy, who runs the Handy Colony for Writers at Marshall, Illinois, and encourages young authors in their dark work, taking in twenty at a time.

"Everybody's up at five each morning," says Mrs. Handy, "then a quick bite and right to work on their novels. Then work, work, work till noon. I go over everything they write, keeping after them, making them rewrite. Everybody writes around the camp. My mother-in-law is ninety. She learned to type at eighty-five, and has just finished her first novel. It's not right. She'll have to do it again."

To me the interesting thing about this is that it makes it plain that American novels are produced deliberately. For years I had been looking on them as just Acts of God like those waterspouts, attacks by pirates, and mutiny on the high seas, which you are warned to look

out for when you travel on the White-Star Cunard line.

I was speaking a few weeks back of an incident which took place in one of the New York churches, where the father of a bride, trying to fulfil and express himself, threw stones at the stained-glass windows and missed them by yards. Another example of poor marksmanship in the United States of to-day has occasioned comment in the papers. While Secretary of Agriculture Ezra T. Benson was about to address an audience in South Dakota, several eggs were thrown at him and not one scored so much as an outer. It is generally felt that if egg-throwers cannot hit a sitting Secretary of Agriculture at a distance of only a few feet, things have come to a pretty pass, and there is a nation-wide demand for a revival of the old custom of hurling pop bottles at baseball umpires.

That was where the youth of the country learned to allow for windage and all that sort of thing. Bring back this fine old practice, people are saying, and it will not be long before Secretaries of Agriculture are refusing to address their public unless in a suit of chain mail and a helmet with a vizor that can be pulled down at a moment's notice.

And now, to conclude, let us take a quick glance at the cat situation in Tennessee. We learn that Mrs. Chester Massey of Knoxville in that State had put some towels in her automatic clothes dryer the other day when she was called to the telephone. She had not been talking long before a suspicion floated into her mind that something was amiss.

"I glanced at the dryer," she told reporters, "and saw this white thing going around inside. I knew I hadn't put anything white in there, just brown towels."

So she opened the door, and there was her cat Mossie doing, like a South American republic, sixty revolutions to the minute. It is pleasant to be able to record that after five minutes, during which he was getting back his breath, Mossie was "just as alive as he can be"—which, if you know Tennessee cats, is saying a lot.

White-

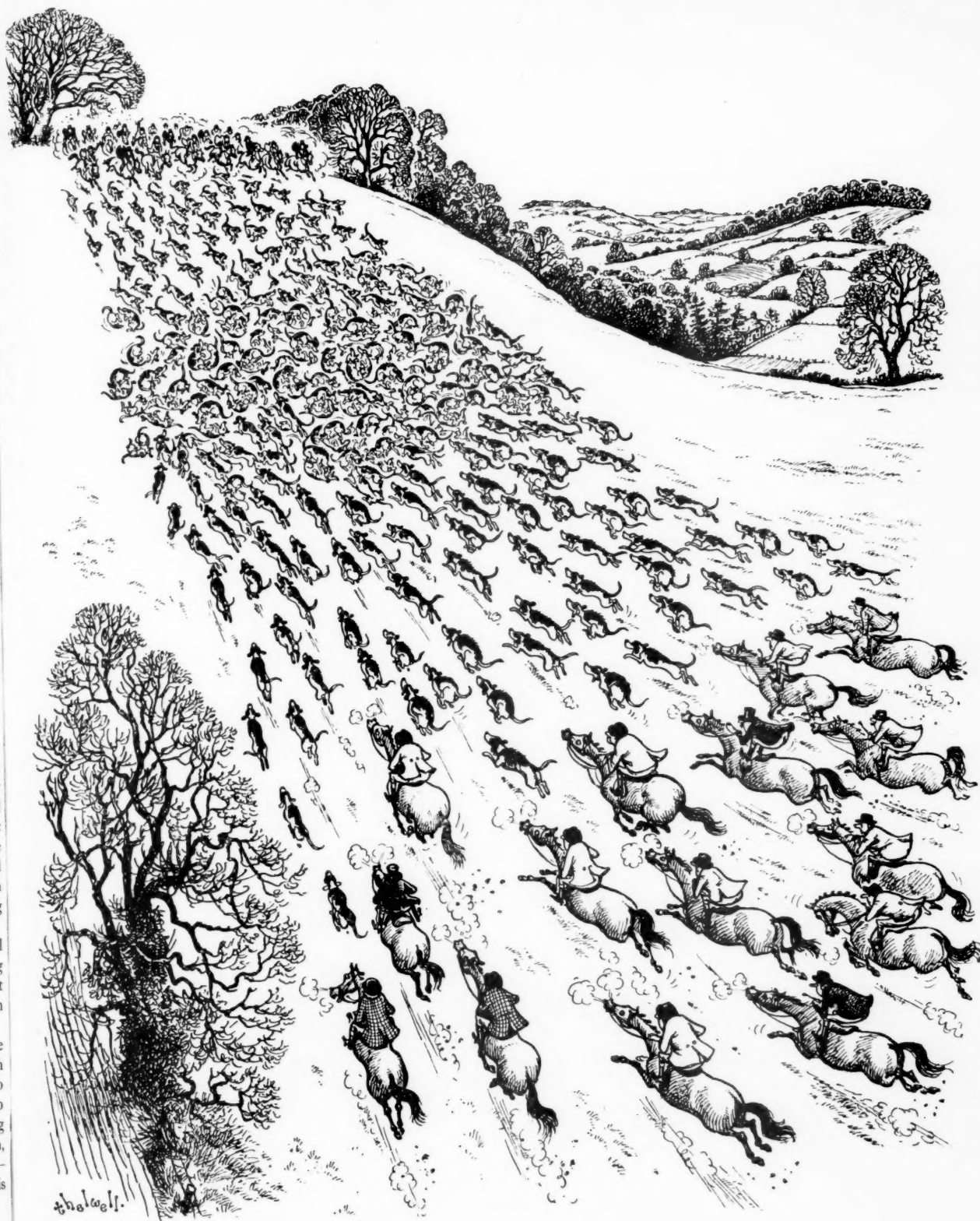
back of  
n one of  
he father  
express  
stained-  
them by  
of poor  
States of  
at in the  
riculture  
dress an  
eral eggs  
he scored  
erally felt  
a sitting  
stance of  
ome to a  
ion-wide  
d custom  
baseball

n of the  
dage and  
back this  
ying, and  
etaries of  
address  
of chain  
r that can  
notice.

us take a  
uation in  
s. Chester  
State had  
automatic  
when she  
She had  
suspicion  
something

she told  
hite thing  
I hadn't  
ust brown

and there  
e a South  
olutions to  
be able to  
es, during  
his breath,  
can be"—  
ee cats, is





# It Depends what You Mean by Bilge

By H. F. ELLIS

FROM all the clouds of ink and verbiage that the sputniks have thrown off, two phrases stand out: that of Police-Constable Trevor Davies, of Swansea, after catching a glimpse of Sputnik II ("Personally, I was rather disappointed"), and *Izvestia's* statement that the first space travellers will not be "adventurers" but "the best people to be found in Soviet society."

The ordinary man's difficulty in these trying weeks has been to decide, to establish and to maintain a creditable and coherent attitude. For the general

run of terrestrial occurrences the correct, or club, reaction comes pretty well instinctively to an Englishman. There are exceptions. Suez was an awkwardness, leading to many a pensively twiddled glass-stem, but in the last ditch, when reason tottered, there were political affiliations to fall back on. Here there were no precedents, nobody to be loyal to, nothing but a metal object unbelievably in orbit and a string of tiresome acquaintances with their repetitive "Well, what do you think of it?"

How to avoid being just open-mouthed and obvious?

Only the Astronomer-Royal, perhaps, has felt in a strong enough position to dismiss the whole thing as bilge and a waste of money. And he is privileged. He started with the initial advantage of having described space-travel as bilge

before it began, so that the great goddess Consistency was at his elbow to prompt and sustain him; and then again, everyone readily understands that a man in his position has so many celestial bodies on his hands already that any addition to their number is likely to lead to tetchiness. For the layman, for you and me, it simply wasn't good enough to say "Oh, I think it's all a lot of rot, don't you know."

Because after all, as one spoke, there the thing was, whizzing along in the cold and trackless void—Archangel 0910; Buenos Aires, 1005; Capetown, 1046—following no intelligible route, obeying no laws known to B.O.A.C. or London Transport, but coming at one, it seemed, from a dozen different directions at once. It was something to do, they said, with the rotation of the earth.

It was possible, of course, to say that it did those damned Americans no harm to be taken down a peg or two. It was *possible*. In the misfortunes of our best friends there is always a certain satisfaction, as La Rochefoucauld, despite the limitations of the French language, did his best to say. But it didn't really inflate the ego. It was also possible to say that, say what one liked, one had to hand it to those damned Russians. But somebody else almost always said it first.

Whatever one said, whatever anyone else said, seemed always inadequate, flat, dull, obvious, ungenerous, unfunny or just plain silly. Only Police-Constable Davies seems to have said the memorable, the really *English* thing. And he, of course, is a Welshman. Not since the Irishman Wilde was disappointed by the Atlantic has so utterly English a sentiment been expressed, and of the two one is bound to prefer the Welshman. Wilde was talking for effect; Constable Davies was simply disappointed.

One ought, of course, to make it clear that this inarticulateness of the English, their difficulty about taking a line, belong to the era of Sputnik I. Before the dog days. Once Laika was afloat the difficulty disappeared. The English have never been in any doubt about their attitude to dogs, whether for or against or even vehemently neutral; and part at least of the tremendous



"And in a matter of minutes, Dr. Woolley, the Sputnik will leave the earth's atmosphere and penetrate Utter Bilge."





*"On the other hand it may be just a dodge for keeping out of rockets."*

excitement over Laika can safely be put down to a feeling of relief, of release—the comfortable sensation of emerging from a bleak, incomprehensible region of awe, not untinged with fear, into a familiar landscape dotted with moral judgments. It was clear at once to the English, the moment the news broke, that the Russians had no right to do it—or, alternatively, that they had. It didn't matter which. Creepiness flies out at the window as soon as morality comes in at the door. Any woman who says "They never should have done it, never. It's a wicked thing" is on terms with the satellite. She has it pinned. Her attitude is clear. Like a ghost that has got itself in bad for haunting on Sundays, the satellite has lost its power to overawe.

But what about the day when men are substituted for dogs? What then? How shall we prepare ourselves to face that prospect, if not with equanimity, at least with a warming stir of argument and indignation? Already a chill discomfort

creeps upon me at the thought of even a couple of Cossacks or Ukrainians orbiting relentlessly overhead. London, 0538; Oslo, 0623; Canberra, 0725; Barents Island . . . One needs to be prepared for this sort of thing. What kind of attitude is going to solace us then?

I do not see that in such circumstances one can hope to sublimate one's fears into ethical judgment. Can it be morally wrong for any human being, even a moujik, to be nine hundred miles up in the air? If he was pushed into the container against his will, yes. If there were any possibility that the Russians would take to disposing of their surplus population—Bulganan, say, or whoever is next on the list—by putting them into more or less perpetual orbit, then indeed one would be armoured with righteousness against Sputnik III (or X or XII). I don't say the uproar would reach Laika level. But it would do. It would stop the gap and keep the wind away.

However, as we have seen, there is no such possibility. *Izvestia*, that fountain of truth, has made it clear that the first space travellers will by no means be criminals, deviationists, personality-cultivators or any such riff-raff. Not even "adventurers," whatever may be the precise shade of meaning of the Russian word so translated. Only the best people will go. I do not pretend to know, I cannot precisely visualize, what "the best people in Soviet society" look like. One will have to wait for the photographs, showing them strapped cosily in their well-bred containers. But I cannot believe it will be easy to get indignant about their trip. One somehow cannot see the Society for Distressed Gentlefolk parading outside the Soviet Embassy.

It would be a mistake, perhaps, to press *Izvestia's* phrasing too hard. The Agency translator, for all one knows, may have felt a little mischievous, and "society" after all has no capital letter. The first aloft may prove in the end



"Have you got the same thing in a Rubens?"

to be Stakhanovites and holders of the Lenin Medal, quite rough types without even the Russian equivalent of an "h" to their names. Or it may be that nobody, in our time at least, will go—that we shall have to be content with a series of dogs and goats and horses, of ever-increasing size but uniformly "sweet phlegmatic dispositions." These things take time. It may be years yet before some Russian Churchill even reaches the point of minuting "Let me have a plan, on one sheet of paper, for putting a couple of elephants into orbit without delay. Don't argue the difficulties . . . They must rise and set with the sun." It may be so. We may have to abandon any idea of reading that Mr. Khrushchev is going round for the four thousandth time at a distance, even at his perigee, of twenty-five thousand miles. But, personally, I shall be rather disappointed.

### Sonnet

On first looking into John Mellanby's *History of Electric Wiring* (Macdonald, 1957)

MUCH have I laboured in the realms of Light,  
And many distant fuzes have I blown,  
Full many a scare my family has known  
As flexes smouldered on a Christmas night.  
I thank you, Mellanby. 'Twas well to write  
Of men whose hands, more skilful than my own,  
Seduced the lightning along lath and stone,  
Or coaxed it into conduits out of sight;  
Men who knew plus from minus, black from red,  
Who climbed from manholes and went home to bed  
To dream of bus-bar systems; and of those  
Like Sturge, who laboured to sophisticate  
Their craft: it was in 1888  
This good man patented his Ceiling Rose.

E. S. TURNER

# Doctor in America

By RICHARD GORDON

THE main difference between doctors in Britain and America is that the American ones have much more money. This is inevitable in a country whose inhabitants refuse to blow their noses or change the baby's nappies without first consulting the appropriate specialist. And every doctor in America is a specialist—if junior drops out of the window you shout for the paediatrician, but if it's grandma you send for the geriatrician. There's a surgical specialist to match every organ, and an electrocardiogram specialist in the middle of Colorado who runs a mail-order service in cardiac diagnosis. There are fortunately also a few old-fashioned G.P.s, but these are known as "general specialists."

Although the American doctor can do his rounds in a Mercury and send his wife shopping in a mink, his patients give him a longer run for his money than in Britain. Ill-health is as much a national preoccupation in both countries, but the American is exposed to many more diseases—from one copy of *The Readers' Digest* alone you can catch anything from schizophrenia to shingles. And the obituary pages of the papers give everyone's reason for appearing in them with such rich detail they leave their readers with one finger on their pulse and the other on their doctor's doorbell. The American hypochondriac is far better educated in scientific polysyllables than our own, who generally has as little idea of what goes on inside his thorax as inside Harwell, and he opens the consultation with the assertion "I gotta split P-wave in my lead three, betcher a million dollars!" This can sometimes be awkward for the doctor, unless he's mugged up the same issue of *Time*.

This necessity of keeping one disease ahead of the patient perhaps accounts for the American doctor *looking* like a doctor. The British doctor floundering about with the bedclothes, wondering where the devil he can wash his hands, and trying to light his 1935 auroscope, has a horror of dressing-up, even for surgery, and our most formal specialists only succeed in resembling ordinary barristers. But the most insignificant of American physicians appears in white trousers and jacket buttoned to the neck,

presenting an appearance of sterility unseen in this country outside West End gentlemen's hairdressers, and is widely pictured thus in advertisements recommending such potentially lethal articles as motor-cars and cigarettes.

Even in Harley Street our consulting rooms resemble Victorian housemasters' studies with nothing more clinical in view than an etching of Sir William Osler; but the United States doctor is obliged to surround himself with white paintwork, strip-lighting, clinical gadgets, and nurses—generally plainer than ours and often with blue hair—who look as if they had been delivered freshly-wrapped with the last batch of sterile dressings. This is because no American patient would bring his duodenal ulcer to an establishment that didn't seem to permit its immediate removal on the hall floor.

The American practitioner's con-

tinued prosperity seems assured, because American doctors' bills, though large, can anyway be regarded like businessmen's luncheon bills. The patients are entitled to deduct them from their income tax, and a sufficiently rich man lucky enough to be hit by a taxi on the eve of the financial year may find himself returning from six months' convalescence in Florida well in pocket over the whole transaction. Any form of national health service is widely regarded as a half-way house on the road to Communism, and everyone from the State Governor to the State garbage-man sets a little aside for his medical care. There are certainly free beds and free hospitals, but if you have your appendix out in one you'll never be asked to another barbecue at the Joneses. In American medicine, alas! charity is a term of contempt.



# Pioneers, O Pioneers

By R. G. G. PRICE

*(Extracts from a typical example of an increasingly common literary form: Reminiscences of the Early Days of a Great Industry)*

I  
WE had now solved the problem of how to make the waxed threads grip the zinc cylinder-walls. Twenty-two hours of continuous work in Old Moshe's workshop under the disused Moravian Chapel had turned dream into fact. Soon we were brought down to earth with a bump. Mabel owed three months' rent, and if her landlady turned her out we should lose our only hot water supply. Between us we managed to muster £5.17.2 but out of that we had to pay for cables to possible backers in Essen and Detroit. Also we had to live; but we were young and enthusiastic and we had Faith.

II  
Harold introduced a lanky, red-haired boy with a shuffling grin into the group and in no time he had revealed himself to be a wizard in manipulating glass. I can still see him sitting on an upturned packing-case blowing, blowing. I wonder whether when he became Viceroy of India he ever gave his A.D.C.s demonstrations of his skill! But I must not spend time joking. Our affairs suddenly worsened and soon the carefree hours in Chiswick Public Baths seemed far away indeed.

III  
The original patent had been taken out by two Austrians, but when a Swedish firm found a loophole in it and began to exploit their invention they sold their rights to an American Corporation. The sale went through without its being realized that some apparently valueless subsidiary rights which were ignored in the transaction would later affect the whole development of what is now known as T.T.G. Meanwhile two young Plymouth deacons were burning the midnight oil trying to make the Duc de Rohan-Briffault's stationary magneto rotate. Their provisional patent was obtained in the actual month that the Italian electrical designer Etti visited the Warsaw Exhibition of Peaceful Arts and

saw in a flash that the possibilities of Macdonald of the Glen's Gravity-Displacement-Comptometer had hardly begun to be seen. However, yet another chapter of the story was, unknown to anyone, being written in a dairy near Winnipeg.

IV  
The day we cast the first stratified tube will never fade from my memory. Only two hours before we were due to begin, our portable blast-furnace was distraised on. Tim went down with a temperature of 104°. The two Yugoslavs had a blazing row and tried to fight it out with molten glass. The Fundamental Research Team had had to do a moonlight flit the previous night from their little room in Balham, and at three in the morning I had been wheeling a pramful of retort-stands across Clapham Common. The Vicar called. Rain got into the carbide.

V  
Getting into conversation with another youth in Battersea Park one evening I discovered that, though he spent his days as a clerk in a coal merchant's, in the evening he dreamed of a way of costing raw material imports by the use of notional currency. I took him along to Tim who saw immediately that as soon as we went into large-scale production his advice would be invaluable, as it is to-day, though he is now a knight, a life governor of two hospitals and a member of ten boards of directors.

VI  
It was no surprise to us when Len and Mrs. Fitch announced that

henceforth they would be partners in life as well as in potential-gauging.

VII  
One day when we were trying to pass chlorine through powdered copper sulphate and everything seemed to be going wrong a journalist friend who was watching us and laughing at our efforts said "Why not try passing the powdered copper sulphate through the chlorine for a change?" Little did he think that this was to be the germ of the £100m. ersatz-cellulose sub-industry. Now whenever I meet the Bishop of Uckfield I pull his leg unmercifully about having neglected to safeguard his patent rights, which to-day would amount to a tidy sum.

VIII  
The first demonstration was a nightmare. I had taken six months to persuade the great German Trust Himmel-ü-Schmidt to investigate our request for finance, and Martha had independently attracted the interest of the ageing chairman of the largest investment corporation west of the Appalachians. Both were sending engineers who refused to spare us more than a single morning. As we stood in the slush of the scrubland near Haslemere that we had hired for the day, desperately trying to tie knots with frozen fingers, we encouraged Mabel, who was struggling with the spirit-stove. At least the picnic must be a success.

When the visitors realized that the cab from the station could get them within only half a mile of where we were standing on comparatively firm ground, it took all Harold's charm to make them cover the last lap. We found it difficult to explain in German that some parts of the demonstration were intended to be not rigorous working tests but merely graphic illustrations of principle—that, for example, when the small red lamp in the control panel lit up, the observers must imagine enormous forces were being withstood by the metal sphere. The troubles of the day really began, however, when it became all too evident that we had seriously miscalculated the melting-point of our apparatus.





Continuing—

## I LIKE IT HERE

by Kingsley Amis

BOWEN sat on the veranda of Buckmaster's house, a glass of madeira before him. He was thinking about Barbara, whom he had seen off on the plane for London, together with the kids, ten days earlier.

After the airlift Bowen had got on a train and gone back down south, where the Bannions had pleaded to be allowed to put him up for a week. Then the phone rang one night and Buckmaster came through on the line.

Yes, on his return from Coimbra he had had Bowen's kind letter explaining about their move. Yes, wanting very much to see them again he had rung up the mountain post office and local knowledge of the Bannions had done the rest. What, Bowen's family had had to return to England? What damnably hard luck. The news of the sick lady was reassuring? Excellent. And what were Bowen's plans now? Leaving there at the end of the week? Going where? But goodness gracious there could be no possible question but that Bowen should come and spend the rest of the time with him. No, he was sorry but he simply was physically unable to contemplate taking no for an answer. His car would meet the train in Lisbon.

And so Bowen had come to be where he was now, uneasy but in quite tolerable shape on the whole, sitting on Buckmaster's veranda with a glass of madeira before him and thinking about Barbara. At least officially he was thinking about Barbara, but thoughts of Buckmaster had a way of keeping on breaking in.

Before Bowen could finally switch his brain on to Barbara, Buckmaster came apologetically on to the veranda.

"Madeira is not perhaps the ideal liquor on a hot afternoon like this," Buckmaster said.

"A bit heavy, you think?"

"Between meals, yes, I do. I recommend a bottle of cold beer."

"That sounds an excellent suggestion."

"Two *cervejas*, then. Excuse me a moment."

Just then a car became audible and soon afterwards rounded the corner of

the dusty track that led up to the house. It was a big open car, glittering fiercely in the sun, and it contained a man and a girl. Before it reached the paved yard below him Buckmaster reappeared, carrying two bottles of beer and two glasses on a tray. "I thought I heard—" he said. His voice broke off instantly and, banging the tray down on the slatted table, he strode to the veranda rail. Bowen saw the man in the car, who was driving it, raise a brown hand in greeting and flash a smile.

Buckmaster's feet moved agitatedly. He looked back and forth between his visitors and Bowen, as if trying to gauge

the effect each party might have on the other. His mouth, no longer sensitive, hung down in a slack and rather pitiable way. Bowen stopped himself from asking if he was all right. The slamming of the car doors below made them both jump. Buckmaster looked hard at Bowen for a moment, this time with the unmistakable air of one visualizing another's response to some plan or hint. He said in a precarious undertone: "This is a man I used to know slightly some time ago. Not, I fear, a very prepossessing character."

"Oh, pity," Bowen said as bluffly as he could.



"Timber!"

The new arrivals could be heard laughing and chatting gaily to each other as they mounted the wooden stair. Buckmaster hurried forward to meet them, blocking Bowen's view when they reached the veranda. A pang of almost unbearable excitement, as well-defined as a pang of fear, displaced all his uneasiness when he heard the man say in a jovial, lightly-accented voice: "Why, hallo, John." My God, the whole thing might be settled one way or the other in the next couple of minutes.

"I hope you don't mind us just to pop in like this," the man was going on, "but we were making a visit at Lisbon



and thought we'd look you up. You don't know my friend, I think." Bowen made out the friend's name as Emilia (or Amelia) something, the something containing one specimen each of the *sh* and the *owng* which seemed compulsory in all Portuguese words of more than one syllable. "And how is your health these days, John old man?"

Still talking, his hand on Buckmaster's shoulder, the man made his way along the veranda. He didn't look in the least unprepossessing, in fact for a man of at least fifty he was remarkably handsome and healthy-looking, so that his lilac-grey suit and thinly-striped white tie seemed further manifestations of well-being. This quality he radiated in full measure, either not noticing or deciding to ignore Buckmaster's nervousness, which hadn't moderated at all. Between them they still blocked Bowen's view of the girl. They put this right when they reached his chair and he got politely to his feet.

When he saw her he had some trouble in choking back the kind of loud bass groan with *tremolo* that his R.A.F. friend (the Cader Idris one) used to utter at the sight of even moderately attractive women. There was nothing moderate about Emilia/Amelia. She was tall and managed to be stately and agile-looking at the same time, just as her unmade-up mouth protruded as well as being slightly thin. Under a crinkly white hat she had the darkest fair hair he had ever seen. Her wide-skirted dress and lace gloves were white too, and might have been taken a moment before out of a plastic wrapper, like the rest of her.

After staring at her for what seemed like a quarter of an hour or so Bowen allowed himself to be introduced. Poor old Buckmaster's still unabated nervousness prevented Bowen from fully enjoying the girl, which was a pity in a way, but if rightly viewed was also desirable.

"Well now, John, tell us of all you've been doing," the Portuguese man said jauntily, looking round for chairs.

"Of course. I wonder, however . . ."

"Ah, a nice cool beer. Just what I fancy to have."

"Would you mind very much . . ."

Buckmaster said to Bowen with evident difficulty. "I have some urgent business to discuss with Dr. Lopes here, which would I fear prove excessively

tedious for you young people. Perhaps you, my friend, would like to take the *senhorita* down to the bar at the corner for something refreshing?"

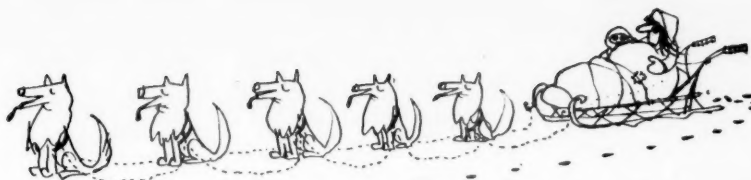
"I'm afraid she doesn't speak a good deal of English," Lopes said, gazing interestedly at Buckmaster. "And here on the table this beer . . ."

"Nonsense, I'm sure they'll manage to get on perfectly well. Would you be so good, my friend?"

His friend would just have to be so good. "Of course, I'd be very glad to, if the *senhorita* has no objection."

Meanwhile, Lopes had shrugged his shoulders and was saying a few sentences in Portuguese to the girl, who looked amiably from face to face. The last sentence was delivered in a sharper tone than the others and was followed by a grin directed at Buckmaster. The old boy didn't notice; he could scarcely keep still with impatience. The girl nodded and smiled at Bowen.

In the next few minutes it became apparent that the operating staff at the great telephone exchange—or, more precisely perhaps, the fair-sized provincial switchboard—which was Bowen's brain were a bit under strength that day. At any rate, the circuits had begun to get clogged. Buckmaster could hardly be Strether now, not after hallo John, used to know him slightly plus urgent business, and you young people clear off and no questions welcomed. There was, naturally, a multitude of possible innocent explanations, all equally likely and unlikely, that must be chewed over at leisure, or could be by someone possessed of the requisite chewing-over fitments. That let him out, he felt. And then there was this Emilia girl. So far she had seemed adequately occupied in just striding along buxomly at his side, but it was too much to hope that this would keep her happy indefinitely. The years in London had helped him to evolve a shameful oh-really-how-incredible kind of patter adapted for female secretaries and journalists, for editresses, for real or supposed poetesses and even paintresses. It would be no good on this occasion. What would be? Suddenly he got the brilliant idea of asking Emilia if she knew anything about Buckmaster. He gave her a smile to assure her of his good intentions and, if at all possible, his sanity. Then he said: "You know Mr. Strether well, *senhorita*?"



Letty

"Como?" she asked. It was a word he had got to know well.

"Senhor S-t-re-ther . . . you know him?"

"Oh, yes," she said with radiant blandness, as if he had told her that an island was a piece of land entirely surrounded by water.

"Doctor Lopes . . . *vieux amigo de* Senhor S-t-re-ther?"

"Lopes—oh, yes." This time she laughed and looked rallying at him. Perhaps he had somehow impugned the man's virility, or else implied that he judged it to be formidable. Whichever it was, it seemed best to leave off while he was still winning.

They rounded a bend and a gang of men working on the road were to be seen, just beyond a triangular metal sign that showed a stylized silhouette of such a man. After a moment the Emilia girl touched Bowen on the arm, smiled, pointed with her neatly-hatted head and more or less drew him away from the road into the vegetation area.

There was shade under the trees, but more heat rather than less. When the girl showed signs of thinking it time to bend their course back to the road, Bowen moved into the lead and took them deeper into the wood. Why, whatever did he want to go and do a thing like that for? All at once he had been struck by the theory that, since he thought he remembered the road taking a big loop round about here, striking through these woodland glades would actually save them time and trouble. This seemed to him important.

Soon they came upon a small clearing where there was turf as short and close as on an English golf course. Here Bowen halted. So did Emilia, resting a hand on the branch of a convenient tree in a queenly manner. Then she looked at him with the kind of coldness that made him begin to be afraid she might suddenly start doing a dance for him, singing harshly and unintelligibly and with bags of stamping, hand-clapping

and finger-clicking, even with a spot or two of the old *olé*. That was Spanish, he knew, but it might easily prove to be Portuguese as well; you could never be sure. To obviate any of that, he took out his cigarettes (2s. the large packet in Lisbon) and offered them. "Have a fag, tosh," he said.

She took one docilely. When she bent to his match he saw that her eyelashes grew thick and parallel all the way along, not in the little criss-crossing groups most girls had, then he glanced away over her shoulder, studying the nearby tree with a botanist's intentness. He really could not have her glancing up at him under those lashes of hers.

He lit his own cigarette, sat down on the dry grass, blew out a shred of tobacco. He felt, and doubtless looked, like a Bank Holiday tripper in the Forest of Dean. A moment later Emilia helped this on by capping his sniff with a rumbling snoring one of her own. She too sat down, first carefully examining the ground.

"O sol," he said to Emilia, pointing up. "Bom."

"Sim," she said, laughing in a very healthy, out-of-doors way. "Muito bom."

"What? Oh yes, that's right. *Muito bom*."

She went on laughing, then checked herself and said severely: "*Escute*," She put her forefinger on Bowen's lapel: "*A jaqueta*."

"*A jaqueta*."

She touched his tie: "*A gravata*."

"*A gravata*."

"*A camisa*."

"*A camisa*. Are you sure that's right?"

Her laughter, which had already returned, became almost continuous when they got on to her clothes. He wondered if the parts of the body were next. He put his arm (*o brasso*?) round her shoulders (*as epaulas*?) and touched her warm dry brown skin. Soon she was leaning against him and had laid a forearm across his knee.

He put both arms round her. He remembered his R.A.F. friend saying of foreign bints not that you could never tell, but that they were all for it. He kissed Emilia. Her lips were firm and straight and her mouth smelt slightly of wine and garlic. He felt he was enough of a citizen of the world now not to mind that.

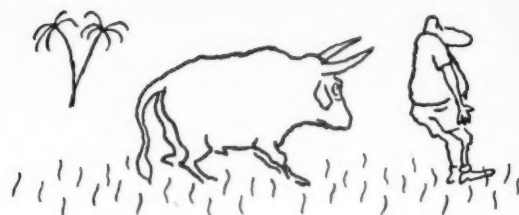
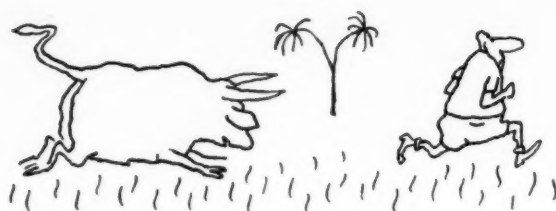
Just as Emilia's shoulders touched the grass Bowen had the feeling that someone had pushed a blunt red-hot needle hard into his flesh between his trouser-cuff and the top of his sock. Bounding up with a yell, he had time to see a thing with stripes like a wasp, only a good bit bigger, buzzing away towards the undergrowth. He got it beautifully with a great swingeing kick before the worst of the pain got him.



## People for Presents

**The Aunt.** As a class, the aunt lacks self-confidence. A generation behind (through no fault of her own), and mistrustful of a status conferred by mere accident of family, she fears to say too much, overbalances, and does. But beneath the gold locket beats a heart of the same, and for nephew or niece anxious to recognize it, and put an aunt at ease, there is nothing like PUNCH. No higher mark of esteem, no surer bond, than this subtle acknowledgment of a joke confidently shared, an aunt's intellect respected. Full subscription details are on page 614.





He stooped down, gasping and wincing. When Emilia burst into an uproar of foreign laughter he did his best to join in. He was succeeding quite creditably when, a couple of minutes later, they moved off.

He brushed Emilia's dress down for her. As he limped off beside her she said surprisingly: "We drink."

"Yes, that's what we do."

Ten minutes later they were sitting outside the café listening to a peasant swearing at his mule. Bowen's leg was only itching now, too. When the old woman who threw up the drinks arrived he tried asking for champagne and, after some by-play with shum-puggner, shahm-pahn-yay and so on, got it. It was Portuguese champagne and went down like mother's milk: he bucked up at the thought that here was yet another field in which French claims to supremacy proved to be unfounded.

They were just pouring out the last of the bottle when Lopes turned up. "I see you've been doing yourselves pretty well," he said boisterously from the driving-seat. "I do wish I could join you and have a real drink-up together, only that I've said we shan't be very late home. Thank you for looking after Emilia." He beamed at Bowen—

ironically? There was no way of knowing.

Lopes opened the door for Emilia and she got gracefully into the car. Bowen felt the scene impressing itself on his memory; a nice bit of background music, violins and things, was audible from the wireless in the café. It would have been easy to give in to sentimental melancholy, but his leg was stinging again as well as itching. And something was nagging at his mind, something to do with Buckmaster, something that Emilia had said. But what could an amorous language-lesson have to do with the man who either was or was not the one indisputably major talent to have arisen since the death of that crazy Polish scribbling sea-dog? What, indeed?

He shook hands with Lopes. "Good-bye, Bowen old man. Nice to have met you. All the best."

He shook hands with Emilia. "Good-bye," she said, unconscious of how nicely she said it. Her thickly-fringed eyes flashed a little signal at Bowen. That was thoughtful of her too.

Buckmaster met him on the veranda. "You delivered the man Lopes's companion to him?"

"Yes, they're away now."

"Thank you, my friend. I leave you to yourself until dinner-time. Some mail awaits you on the table in the passage."

Bowen fetched it and sat on the veranda to read it. Apart from the stuff that Oates and/or Bannion had redirected, there was a letter from Barbara which had come straight here.

He looked idly through the other letters. Suddenly one of them took all his attention. He ripped it open.

Yes, it was from Baron Knowland all right. The text said that since Bowen was occupying furnished accommodation at the above address he had no security of tenure therefore agreement was at an end with effect from the last day of the month would he please find alternative accommodation as new tenants would be requiring to move in with effect from that date.

Bowen's mouth fell ajar. Furnished accommodation. New tenants. All the Bowen possessions out in the street. Five days to go till the end of the month. Barbara obviously can't do anything. Right, Benjamin Hyman, this is where you come in, boy. Cable—no, too late to-day; first thing in the morning.

(To be continued next week)

## The Arras

By CLAUD COCKBURN

TWO pamphlets entitled, respectively, "Talk Better in Your Sleep" and "Is Your Private Conversation Record-worthy?" and now obtainable at most book-sellers, show timely appreciation of the general public eagerness to "get in on" the exciting possibilities of what people are calling "the eavesdrop age."

By throwing a certain amount of cold water on earlier popular estimates of the extent of wire-tapping in Britain, the recent official inquiry gave rise to the suspicion that in this respect this

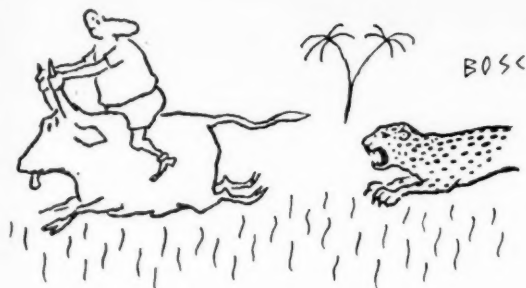
country is lagging hopelessly behind the United States not only in the limited field of telephone-tapping *per se* but in other listening-in techniques of far wider scope and utility.

(It has been pointed out that by planting a device "no larger than a champagne cork" in somebody's "private" den, and "energizing" it electronically from any distance up to a mile, it is already possible to make a clear, accurate recording of all conversations taking place in the room in question, without any tiresome fiddling

with tangled wires, or that costly, time-wasting business of hiring a Post Office uniform and pretending to "see about" the telephone while actually transforming it into an open "mike." And this is but one of the "up-to-the-minute" aids available to the modern man who wants to know something.)

British scientists, however, are confident that the American lead in this forward movement, if indeed it exists, will be rapidly overcome. The qualification is necessary, because many experts are of opinion that already a





man in my position has time or thought to devote etc., etc., etc.

What is called "hidden mike consciousness" is already exercising a beneficial effect in many directions. In a recent demonstration of what is known as the "Watch It" test, two leading medical authorities—X and Y—

were brought together in a room in Harley Street and induced to chat together on the subject of Asian flu. *They were led to believe that the champagne cork on the sideboard was a champagne cork.*

X: Whole thing's a mystery to me.

Y: Same here. All the same, when people ask fellows like us about causes and cures and so on, one feels a bit of a fool if one can't say anything.

X: Oh I find I can always dream up some bit of guff. Let's go and have a—

(At this point the Test Supervisor interrupted to say "Gentlemen, it is my duty to inform you that your conversation is being clearly and accurately recorded at a distance of one mile, and may be made available to the relevant medical authorities and the newspapers.")

Y: X, you're priceless. You've hit it off perfectly—just the way the old-time, long out-of-date medical man used to talk. Never knew you were such an excellent mimic.

X: But seriously, Y old man, I do feel that by continuing to spare no effort to reach a solution of this problem, by working night and day if need be, to bring to bear all our immense knowledge etc., etc.

It has been truly said that "if each and all of us always lived and spoke as though we had a Polonius listening behind the arras, we should be better men and women than we are now."

What has been, until now, insufficiently realized, is that in Shakespeare's day—in fact throughout the "arras period" of interior decoration—all thinking people actually did assume that there was someone there, taking it all down and preparing to use it in evidence against them.

Shakespeare has, because of failure

to understand this point, been wrongly accused of making his characters speak in "an unnatural manner." Few of them, it used often to be objected, spoke in the "everyday style of characters in a play by, for instance, Noël Coward." It was supposed that there was something defective about Shakespeare's ear for common speech.

It is now known that he put the words he did into the mouths of his characters because that was the way in which "arras-conscious" people habitually spoke—they had no wish to be on record as people with a total vocabulary of about one hundred words apiece, and even when merely discussing the weather they did so in a style which would make clear to the ultimate audience, even were it only the Star Chamber, that they were people of wide culture and powerful imagination.

Now, neo-Elizabethans, you have the same chance, meet the same challenge. Make sure that nothing you say at the family breakfast table or in the company board-room is going to sound commonplace or flat to the people recording it a mile or less away. Remember, they have taken a lot of trouble to hide that champagne cork in your dining/board/bedroom as the case may be, and they have a right to expect to hear something worth while.

#### Hospital Appointments

"£1,000 Required to finance opening of new butcher's shop in growing area, good interest and monthly return."

*Birmingham Post*



great number of the objects no larger than champagne corks—empty matchboxes, for instance—seen in the offices or homes of business executives, Cabinet Ministers, husbands, wives, etc., are energized electronic devices, recording freely.

Certainly nothing but good can result from such a development, and forward-looking men and women, always alert to novelties in modern living, are already learning how to make the most of such techniques—realizing that though we may not all be able, as yet, to listen-in, we are all, however restricted our budget, in a position to be listened-in to.

As a case in point it was being recalled the other day how, during the Budget Leak inquiry in the 1930s, Mr. J. H. Thomas, then Dominions Secretary, disclosed that when a prominent financier called at the Dominions Office one afternoon, what they talked about in leisurely fashion was the question of the prospective winner of a race at Newmarket the following afternoon.

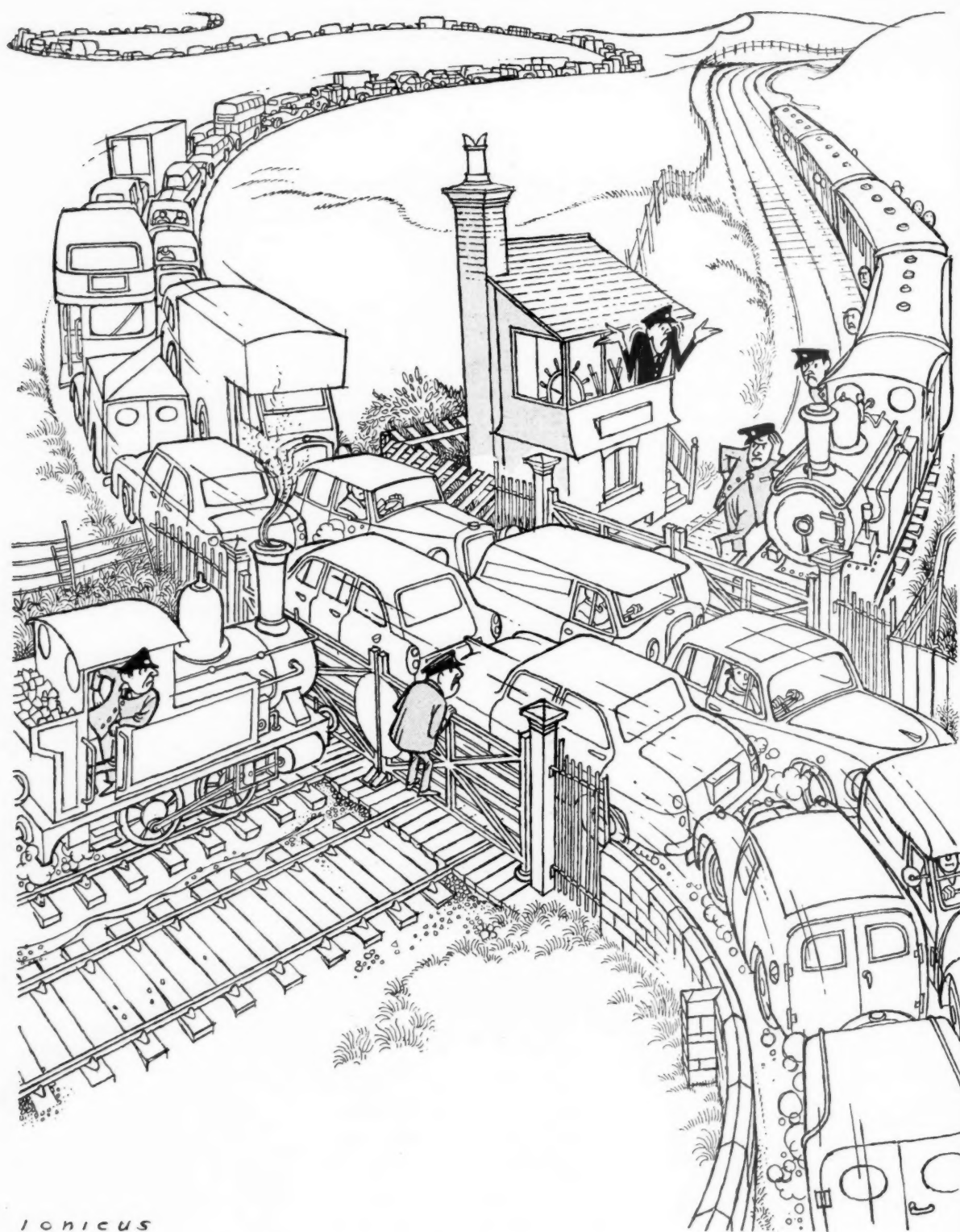
In those days, of course, had it not been for the leak inquiry, nothing would have been known as to the nature of that conversation.

To-day, the caller on a Cabinet Minister finds himself in a very different and, it must be said, nobler atmosphere.

*Minister (with glance at petrol lighter "inadvertently" left between two blue-books on shelf):* Hullo, Alfred. I'm afraid you find me up to the eyes in work, as usual. Still, anything for the good of the country is what I always say. No sacrifice too great. However, if you're here on urgent public business...

*Caller:* You know what they're saying about the 3.30? They tell me that it's going to be a walk-over for—

*Minister:* D'you mean to tell me, Alfred, you've come here to talk about horse-racing? Are you suggesting that a



ICHNICUS

L  
of c  
eco  
peo  
pro  
pol  
opt  
wel  
way  
we  
I  
dox  
"T  
squ  
tha  
du  
"d  
a  
exp  
tha  
pe  
ear  
ne  
pro  
of  
ser  
fiv  
inc  
ev  
rat  
rec  
eff  
bu  
un  
me  
cla  
tic  
al  
"P  
th  
w  
on  
th  
w  
ea  
ar

## In the City



### The War of Differentials

**L**ORD CHANDOS'S address to the Institute of Directors was a blast of common sense in an atmosphere of economic smog. I do not expect many people to agree with his tentative proposals for the reform of wages policy, but his originality and implied optimism should surely be widely welcomed. In our reappraisal of the wages problem we need all the ideas we can get.

Dealing one in the eye at our orthodox economists Lord Chandos said "Those who imagine that you can squeeze down the volume of money so that prices always remain stable are due for a rude awakening." In a "democracy with universal suffrage," a democracy pledged to economic expansion, it is unrealistic to suppose that prices can be tightly pegged, or that pegging would satisfy either the wage-earner or the employer. As a basis for a new industrial charter Lord Chandos proposed a longer notice of termination of employment (based on length of service), and a wage agreement covering five years, allowing for an annual wage increase of two and a half per cent for every employee.

These suggestions (talking points rather than detailed statements of policy) recognize that industry cannot make effective plans for investment or export business while its labour costs remain unpredictable for more than a few months at a time, that repeated wage claims, endless negotiation and arbitration make good industrial relations almost impossible, and that the old "hire and fire" methods of dealing with the wage-earner are out-of-date.

Lord Chandos's five-year plan for wage increases might be acceptable to organized labour if there were not such things as differentials. Though they would never admit it unions are as eager to squeeze other unions as they are to squeeze the bosses. The much

vaunted solidarity of the working-classes means very little when a "have-not" union tries to compete with the elite of the movement. Bus workers have a grievance because they have made smaller gains since the war than railway workers; farm workers feel that they are at least as important to the national economy as highly-paid factory workers; the miners, out in front, do not intend to allow any other union to catch up.

Economic illiteracy is widespread, but union leaders at least understand the facts of life; they *know* that a wage increase achieved without compensating improvement in productivity automatically reduces the real value of all other wages—and of course salaries. The battle for the national cake is no longer class warfare: it is an internecine family feud.

Since the war the squabble over

differentials has been gravely complicated by the rapid extension of the public sector of employment, by the presence on the field of many millions whose wages are determined in the long run by what the Government, not the traffic, will bear. It is difficult in the circumstances to imagine that inflation can be tackled successfully until an attempt has been made to unravel the differentials tangle.

But would any Government dare to interfere with the union law of the survival of the most powerful? And if it did could we still hope to avoid the brand of guided democracy which most people regard as euphemized totalitarianism?

It would be useful to have Lord Chandos's supplementary five-year plan for a revision of differentials.

MAMMON

\* \* \*

## On the Touchline



### Newsoc

**T**HE news that some school or other is switching from soccer to rugby is always good for a paragraph or two, so I don't see why the news that Highcroft Preparatory School (Headmaster, J. H. Cumberlidge, B.A. [Oxon]) is switching from rugby to soccer shouldn't rate a mention.

The playing fields—as you were, *field*—of Highcroft is visible from the main Farnham road, audible from the Hog's Back. I stopped the car, looked right, left and right again, and was amazed to find small boys in complete occupation of my retina. Sixty or seventy nippers were charging about the meadow. A larger boy in a blue blazer and with grey flannels tucked inside his socks seemed to be at the centre of the disturbance. The goalposts were large TV aerials. The ball was spherical.

Mr. Cumberlidge led me into his study, extracted the trousering from dewy socks and invited me to smoke.

"I've got a hundred and fifty boys here, and it's in the prospectus that games are compulsory."

I said that rugby football was usually preferred in such circumstances because it employed thirty boys at a time instead of soccer's twenty-two.

"Ah," he said, "but with newsoc, to coin a phrase, any number can play. We play thirty-three a side—fifteen forwards, nine half-backs, six back and three goalies. That's more than twice as economical as rugger."

"But surely . . ." I said.

"The finer skills? The pattern-weaving? Don't worry, it's all there. Newsoc teaches them ball control."

"Do the boys like it?" I asked.

"Ultimately newsoc will become our national game. The terraces will be empty. Twenty thousand soccer fans will line up every Saturday on every major ground."

He became expansive in his gestures, threw up his whistle and headed it across the room.

"We don't want a nation of spectators," he said, "we want active sportsmen, participants. We want . . ."

"What I can't understand," I said, "is why you had to switch over to soccer. Surely newrug would have been equally effective, economical and worthy?"

He considered me uncomprehendingly. Then a look of horror settled on his flushed face.

"Here, steady on," he said. "You don't think I'd muck about with rugger like that, do you? I mean to say, soccer's one thing and rugger's rugger. And as an Old Chudleighian . . ."

BERNARD HOLLOWOOD





**M**R. MARPLES, the flint-hearted Postmaster-General, sternly refused to Mr. Gibson any special concession for postal chess. What is this but a declaration of class war? Is it not well known that among players of postal chess are to be found old-age pensioners who will thus be deprived of innocent recreation in the blameless evening of their lives? Is not this a direct frontal attack upon the basic principle of workers' chess?

The truth—a truth exemplified by even more cogent examples than that of postal chess—is that there is always a special case against standing firm on any particular issue, and yet, if the Government never stands firm anywhere, where are we? It is, of course, patently true that the real answer is increased

production. Mr. Gaitskell was on quite a fair point in complaining that the Government had given no very clear indication how they were going to increase production. But Mr. Maudling was on an even fairer point in complaining that the Opposition had given even less indication how they were going to do it. "I do not want to be accused of encouraging anybody to do anything," claimed Mr. Gaitskell, and although it was, to be fair, in a different and somewhat more sensible context that he used the phrase, yet it is a fair summary of the Socialist party's policy towards inflation.

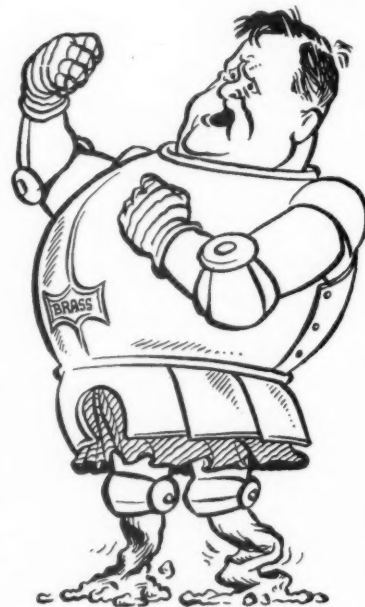
It is Mr. Maudling who has really come best of all out of this Queen's Speech. In a House in which debating is rare, Mr. Maudling certainly does debate. He answers the previous speaker point by point. The statistics are stored in his capacious memory—not dug out of a typescript done up for him by a Civil Servant, and so far he has always got away with it. One cannot help being a little afraid that this spontaneity is becoming almost a *tour de force* in which he takes pride and that one day pride will have a fall. But let us hope not, for the House would certainly be a less interesting place if it did.

For all the bluff and counter-bluff it does not look as if either side really wants to have a head-on collision, but how to break the deadlock?

People listened with more interest for the two speeches—from Sir Thomas Moore on the one side and Mr. Jack Jones on the other—which did try to find a middle way, than they did to the formal party ranting, which could very much have been taken as spoken; but

not even these speeches made anything very clear. In the Lords Lord Salisbury also tried to rise above party. But Lord Salisbury, I fear, these days is quite frankly an almighty flop. That a man who was lately so powerful should so soon have become disregarded is indeed alike sad and surprising. His proposals that wages should be settled by Ministers was universally condemned alike by opponents and by ex-colleagues. The charitable concluded that he had not really meant what he said. The only man in these days who has succeeded in saying something that has a hope of being accepted by both sides is Lord Chandos—and he did not say it in the House of Lords.

Yet the week has been mainly Leak Week. Members of Parliament, like





indeed many other people, are always much more interested in the story of an individual than in the fate of society. A Leak will always fill the Chamber as rapidly as an economic policy will empty it. It had looked as if the Leak story was going to peter out in boredom. Vague accusations against unidentified nonentities were not sufficient to keep it in the headlines. Then on Tuesday all flared up again with Sir Leslie Plummer's introduction of Mr. Oliver Poole's name. Mr. Poole himself demanded an inquiry and the Prime Minister had hardly an option but to agree. The debate on Thursday for the setting up of the Tribunal was, it must be confessed, a pretty silly business. If a Tribunal was to be set up, then one would have thought that little purpose was served by previously making allegations, refuting allegations or defining allegations on the floor of the House. If Tribunal there was to be, then surely to goodness let all that be left to the Tribunal. Yet Members were content to waste a good deal of time in this curious exercise, and indeed Sir Henry D'Avigdor-Goldsmid made a speech so curious that, without in the least intending it, he came precious near to turning the whole affair into a farce. The only pertinent speeches were those which asked for exact information on the powers or scope of the Tribunal. Mr. Rawlinson asked about its powers of evidence and to this it



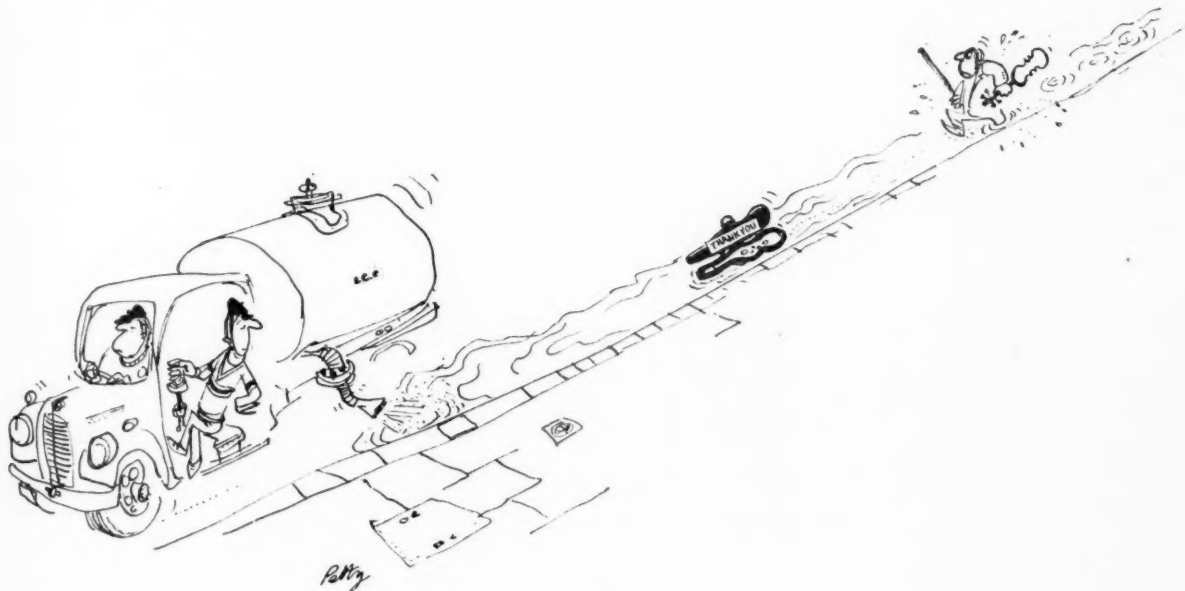
*Mr. Sherlock Wilson and the Case of the Peculiar Leak*

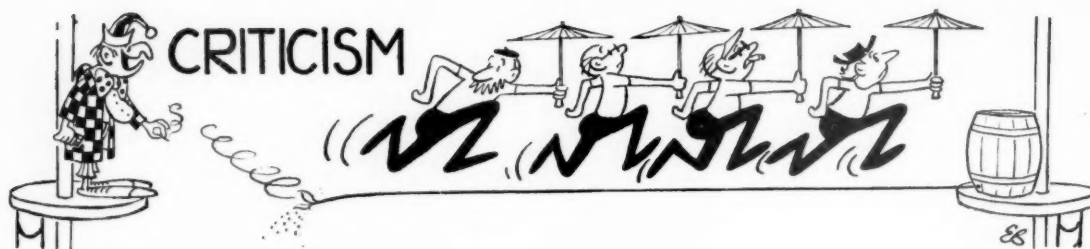
appears that the relevant Act gives a clear answer. Mr. Grimond and Mr. Silverman asked about its terms of reference. Both the Speaker and the Prime Minister had said that, even though the Socialist amendment was not in form acceptable, the Tribunal would have power to investigate not only alleged information about the Bank Rate but any disclosures that may have been made on impending Government policy. But Mr. Silverman seemed justified in asking whether this was by any means clear from the terms of reference which Parliament was going to give to the Tribunal. Mr. Grimond argued that a Tribunal was doubtless a proper body to investigate the question of fact about a leak, but, if the general question of policy on the question whether Chancellors ought to have prior consultations with leaders of industry or of trades unions or with selected journalists was to be raised, was not

that a matter to be decided by the House rather than a judicial Tribunal?

Underlying it all was the problem of the moral right of Members to make accusations against persons under a cloak of Parliamentary privilege. No one disputes that their legal privilege should be safeguarded. But it is hard to think that it is morally justifiable to make accusations against persons without substantiating them—that it was, to take an example from the other side, morally justifiable, for instance, for Captain Pilkington to call Mr. Muggidge “an hysterical Communist” without substantiating his charge. In the same way Sir Leslie Plummer was, it may be, justified in demanding an inquiry into what had been said to Mr. Poole, but he was as certainly not justified in describing Mr. Poole as “tarnished” before that inquiry had taken place and reported.

CHRISTOPHER HOLLIS





## BOOKING OFFICE

### The Pursuit of Lovers

**Voltaire in Love.** Nancy Mitford. *Hamish Hamilton*, 21/-

**V**OLTAIRE's liaison with Madame du Châtelet lasted longer than any of his love affairs. In many ways it was nearer to a marriage. She was clever, ardent, bossy, protective: he was affectionate, entertaining and a companion in the library as well as in bed, more so as the years went on. She was an ardent lover not only of men but of natural philosophy. For many years she was one of the leading French supporters of Leibnitz. Voltaire gradually converted her to Newton, whom she translated and adapted. The relationship is more interesting as a friendship and an intellectual partnership than as a prolonged adultery. It would support an essay, something witty and penetrating and elegant, better than a full-scale treatment.

In an introductory note Miss Mitford says that a study of Voltaire's literary and philosophical achievements would be above her station. She has therefore limited herself to a study of his relations with Madame du Châtelet. She adds that his work as a reformer began only after her death. With the great advantage of help from Mr. Theodore Besterman, including use of some letters not yet published in his great edition, she has drawn out the tale of Voltaire's quarrels and journeys and amours to full length without relying for bulk on anything that might strike the *Regency Rakes* public as highbrow or dull. Wherever a reference to a com-pleasant husband or a woman with two lovers can be dragged in it is, at least provided it occurs among the French aristocracy. The book is never specific enough to be enjoyably lubricious nor penetrating enough to be taken seriously as a study of the psychology of genius.

No doubt Miss Mitford's brilliant publicity, so brilliant that she is sometimes confused with Miss Nancy Spain, will sell the book, but it marks the abandonment of her promised career. The novels of her middle period were

good entertainment but they were something very much more. It looked at one time as though she were going to develop into a comic novelist of high quality and subtlety, a really valuable writer. This kind of book-making simply is not good enough for her.

Many of the incidental delights, the anecdotes, the bits of scandal from high-life, the casual jokes, are entertaining, though often the effect is spoiled by a nudge. This book is like all the light

thinking about the physical world and, if so, what, she would have grounded her book in reality and what too often comes out as farce might have been comedy. But the whole pretence between Miss Mitford and her readers is that the environment of learning is more important than the content, the library than the books in it, the arrangements for publication than what is published, the love-life than the intellectual life, the eccentricity than the essence.

Who is going to be written up by Miss Mitford next? Chardin? Lavoisier? Rousseau? Once you accept that a writer's writing is only an opportunity for a display of grotesque jealousies and the like, the way is open; but the loves of Shelley, the loves of de Musset, the loves of George Moore are nothing isolated, while in context they may be both amusing and revealing, and the context is whatever makes the man remembered, not what makes him ridiculous. Basically the objection to this book is the same as the objection to the *Loves-of-Chopin* kind of film. Whatever view may be taken of Voltaire as a thinker, a stylist, a poet or a dramatist, there he is, bang in the middle of the French eighteenth century, one of its glories. Surely by vulgarizing him Literature is vulgarized, and there are plenty of people doing that without the admirable author of *The Pursuit of Love* coming down to help.

R. G. G. PRICE



relief in a full-scale biography extracted and joined together. Voltaire even outside his work is an interesting character; but the interest is largely comparative. Many of the things reported of him are memorable only because he was a big enough man for the details of his behaviour to have something, as it were, to throw light on.

Voltaire's interest for Miss Mitford seems to be as a focus for aristocratic patronage. If the important thing about Madame du Châtelet is that she married a marquis, her studies are, in comparison with this glory, faintly ridiculous. But were they? If Miss Mitford had devoted even half a page to explaining whether she had any importance in the history of French

## Close-Up

**Among the Dahlias.** William Sansom. *Hogarth Press*, 15/-

The sudden impact of the abnormal upon the normal is Mr. Sansom's theme in many of his new stories: a complacent business-man ("in fireplaces"), strolling through the zoo, is abruptly confronted by a lion at large; a botanist equipped with a new denture blunders into the unfamiliar atmosphere of an Espresso bar (though it is hard to believe that anyone exists who has *not* heard of such places); a husband whose odd sense of humour consists in counterfeiting scenes

of infidelity gets actually caught in *flagrante*: in each case with unforeseen results. Perhaps the best piece is "The Man with the Moon in Him," a study of a young man obsessed by an urge to scrawl obscenities on Tube station walls, which almost equals the author's previous *Various Temptations* in its sympathetic understanding of an aberrant type. Admirers of Mr. Sansom's slow-motion close-up descriptive technique will be satisfied by the drum-majorette's dark-blue dimpled knees in "Outburst," while the volume also includes "The Equilibrad," a Kafkan novelette, until now obtainable only in a limited edition at 21/-.

J. M-R.

#### The Sugar Pill. T. S. Matthews. Gollancz, 18/-

According to Mr. Matthews, a former editor of the American magazine *Time*, the staff of the *Manchester Guardian* regard their paper and the *Mirror* as "opposite sides of the same coin"—"the *Mirror* speaks warmly and coarsely to the masses, while the *Guardian* soliloquizes for the intelligentsia . . . But the two papers are much more alike than they are different . . ." I don't get it: it seems to me that only someone with a ratiocinative kink could argue from such a ludicrous proposition. The cerebral side of Fleet Street is apt to lose its head when it goes slumming. A few years ago the *Express* was its pet—"a beautiful job of professional perversion"; now Hugh Cudlipp's *Mirror* is the blue-eyed teddy-boy.

The straining for relationship between the halves of this book damages two very good essays, but they are still worth reading. In the potted history class, Mr. Matthews' analysis of the *Guardian* of Scott and Wadsworth earns a highly commended.

A. B. H.

#### Letters of Lady Palmerston. Edited by Tresham Lever. Murray, 28/-

Emily Lamb was the sister of Melbourne and the wife, *en secondes noces*, of Palmerston; she moved in the most exalted Whig Society, and for over half a century she noted impressions, domestic and national, perspicacious and engaging, in her lively correspondence. She recorded Georgian Brighton: Lady Jersey "in a state of sub-irritation," and Lady Conyngham "sailing about here in great Glory very proud of her situation" and looking "as if she was swelling with drinking Curacao." She chronicled the tedious affairs of that "sad drab," Queen Caroline ("the Queen seems to me *dished*"). She approved wholeheartedly of Queen Victoria: "What a Jewel of a Woman that little Queen is!" And then, as she put it, she *ruralized* after the London season, "cured by riding, and a mutton chop for Breakfast." She chuckled over her baby, gave a handsome supper, drove her "darling Pony Carriage" through a countryside "Green as in Spring," and continued to chatter,

speculate and inform. Her letters are well presented by Sir Tresham Lever. She is a delightful companion to Mr. Creevey.

J. R.

#### March the Ninth. R. C. Hutchinson. Bles, 15/-

An ex-Viennese American surgeon who is working with a relief organization in Trieste is persuaded to visit a lonely farm to operate on an escaping war criminal who had committed a massacre in a Yugo-Slav village. He falls in love with the Nazi's wife and helps the fugitives to escape, remaining with them when they are caught and taken to the village and dealt with. The hero is a good man and he risks his life and honour to help a bad man. The description of constructive work proceeding among primitive passions and the atmosphere of frontier-crossing and confused nationality gives depth to the discussion of loyalty and guilt. The surface is pure story-telling, like more deliberate Ambler though the character-relations have something of Stanley Weyman, who was more interested in conflicts of honour than in duels and jingling spurs and marked cards. The female characters are weak but the narration is splendidly firm and professional. I read it through thick and thin.

R. G. G. P.

#### Search Me. Patrick Anderson. Chatto and Windus, 15/-

Reading Mr. Anderson is like walking down a corridor of echoes: in his style the voices and accents of other autobiographers—Denton Welch, Jocelyn Brooke, perhaps a whisper of Anthony Carson—cross-fade, slightly distorted as in an experimental Third Programme play. The apparently unpublished poems liberally sprinkled through his pages are also derivative (at one time he was described as "the Dylan Thomas of Canada"). Experiences in Soho, with a madwoman and a Ming dragon; in a grammar-school lecturing to a class of "Kentish Town toughs"; in digs up North where the landlady's mediumistic



"I won a very large sum on the pools, kept on working, lived as humbly as before, incurred the odium of my wife and finally lost her to a fellow who'd won £100 on Premium Bonds."

niece was "controlled" by a Tibetan monk named Ong; then on to Spain, where "the sky stamped dark blue squares against the windows," "siesta swells in the room like a great wave, green, tawny, motionless as glass," and the author finds peace with the wife of his repressed-homosexual friend, the painter Bridge Maitland. A pretentiously honest and embarrassing book, despite its ostensible dislike of the *chi-chi*.

J. M-R.

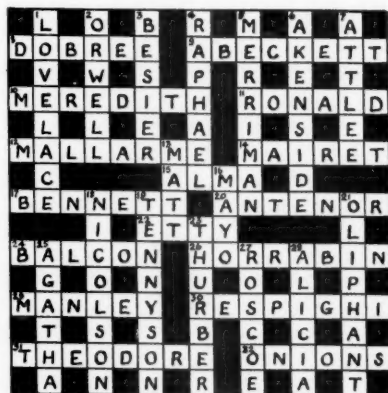
#### Oxford Life. Dacre Balsdon. Eyre and Spottiswoode, 25/-

Under the smooth pleasantries of its surface this gossip guide to the Oxford Seasons, from the Nomination of the Vice-Chancellor to Commem. Balls and Vivas, is really a defence of the autonomous colleges against the growth in power of the state-financed and increasingly state-controlled university. It is agreeable reading; some of its stories are new and even the chestnuts are in blossom.

Unfortunately it is a concentrate of everything about Oxford that its critics most dislike. At times it reads like advertising copy for port. It gives no feeling that Oxford has ever been the scene of intellectual, religious, æsthetic

#### Gift Calendar

A gay Gift Calendar with drawings from *Punch* on all the twelve tear-off pages is obtainable from good stationers or Messrs. G. Delgado Ltd., 53-55 East Road, City Road, London, N.1, at 4s. 3d. (post free abroad 4s.).



Solution to last week's crossword.



or political passion. Any picture of Oxford that treats Learning as peripheral is distorted. Mr. Balsdon is a don, but his references to the Oxford of a generation ago are so remote from my own memory of it that I cannot help optimistically mistrusting his picture of the present. Mr. Balsdon gives the impression that undergraduates read only when forced by dons, and dons read only to pass the time in the vacation.

R. G. G. P.

## AT THE PLAY



*Bells are Ringing* (COLISEUM)  
*The Kidders* (ARTS)

SINCE *Guy and Dolls* the American musical has been travelling downhill, into an early grave, one feared. *Bells are Ringing* brings this melancholy declension to a halt. It is not particularly witty, and its tunes are not remarkable, though I dare say some of them will stick; but it has a better story than most, it has irony, it is not over-sugared, it has charm, and above all it has a most welcome new actress, Janet Blair.

Miss Blair, who earned every scrap of a first-night reception that must have over-heated the curtain machinery, is an original comédienne in her own right, but sometimes I thought Mary Martin was back. There is the same sustained gaiety, the same simplicity that comes from complete control of a wide range of comic weapons, and the same beautiful sense of irony that can turn a piece of unexpected fooling to delicious mockery. Miss Blair is young, attractive, small and incredibly nimble; her voice is no great

shakes, but her personality rivets attention in the largest crowd.

As an operator on the switchboard of a telephone-answering service her motherly interest in her clients goes far beyond the mere passing on of messages. The bits of information she collects she distributes freely; the unsuccessful dentist, who composes while he botches teeth, she sends to a producer's audition; the actor playing at Marlon Brando is re-dressed and found a part; and, most important, a playwright on the bottle she gingers into finishing his script. Most important, for there lies our romance. As sub-plots we have a vice-squad inspector convinced that the telephone service is a cover for something shady, and an ingenious bookie sharing the same office and taking bets in the form of mass orders for gramophone records.

All this makes for lively action, but *Bells are Ringing* is so lighthearted that it breaks easily into odd turns and sketches; for instance, Miss Blair and her playwright, to whom George Gaynes gives a nice, large sincerity, turning a gloomy crew of subway passengers into ecstatic revellers by sheer exuberant friendliness. The chorus sings and dances to a fine discipline. Eddie Molloy as the bookie, and Allyn McLerie and Jean St. Clair as the other telephonists, are useful in the second line, but in spite of her evident modesty the evening belongs to Miss Blair, who is on the stage nearly all the time.

It is now the turn of the American *Angry Young Man*, and in *The Kidders*, by Donald Ogden Stewart, the reasons

for his anger are made no clearer than they have been in the British models. The hero keeps a sub-machine-gun in his trim Middle Western villa, and after a few drinks is apt to fall into a mood of murderous exaltation in which he threatens to blow the daylight out of humanity. There is a faint suggestion that he had a bad time in the Pacific, but he is never substantiated as a war wreck; instead one gets the unsatisfactory impression that he is simply rebelling against the cruel fate of having to earn a fairly comfortable living.

The kidding of the title refers to the hearty falsity with which he and his cronies put up a common front. They are all scrambling for jobs in a rat-race of competition; he is out of love with his wife, who in desperation has become the mistress of his best friend. Her successful sister arrives from New York in this nerve-torn ménage, seeking what she imagines to be a peaceful haven from the pressures of big business; but she is pursued by her boss, whose mistress of course she is, and then amorous confusion is let loose. Whatever couple is left alone for a moment automatically begins to make love, so that really a pencil and paper are needed to keep abreast of their rolling emotional relationships.

At one point in the second act things were in such a tangle that it seemed scarcely worth while to make this effort; but Mr. Stewart's third act proved the most dramatic, and I felt more and more that he had almost written a good play. He turns a phrase well, and has an eye for tense theatrical situations; where he fails is in making us mind what happens to his people, and in a clear statement of his case. For the point of what is presumably a serious attack on the human effects of cut-throat competition is constantly being obscured by all this petty necking.

So far as it can be, it is well acted. Faith Brook's part as the refugee from New York is diluted by the play's unnecessary complications, but she takes it with authority. Lyndon Brook (Miss Brook's brother) manages well the boy's dreamy bitterness, considering we are not told what he is bitter about. As his wife Pauline Yates rather touchingly tears down her façade of hard brightness, and Ronan O'Casey is quietly impressive as the play's idealist.

It is much more articulate, in that the characters finish their sentences, without benefit of grunting, than most American plays of its kind; but the end can only be counted a semi-colon, for the gun remains in the house.

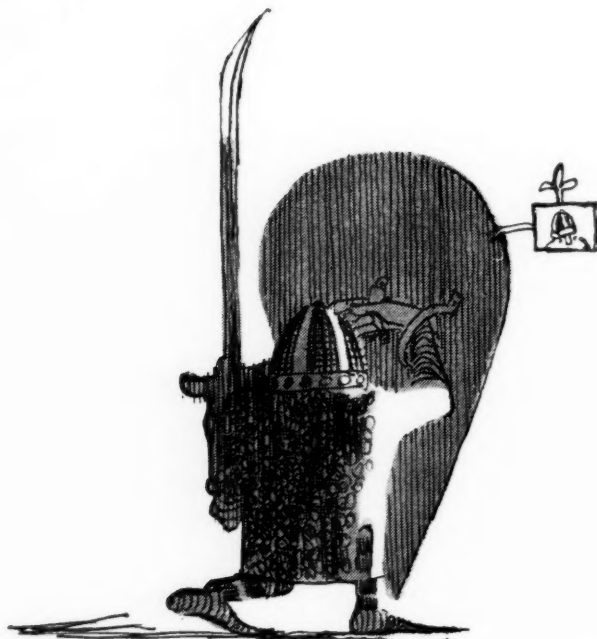
### Recommended

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

Just time to catch *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* (New—8/5/57), strong stuff from Australia, and *A Dead Secret* (Piccadilly—5/6/57), Paul Scofield excellent in a superior crime play.

ERIC KEOWN

Paine.







## AT THE BALLET

Urals Ensemble (DRURY LANE)

THE latest song and dance team to visit us from Russia is, like its recent predecessors, firmly rooted in lively peasant art which here and there it lifts to the level of highly spectacular accomplishment. Its dancing is vigorous, though only occasionally graceful, and its singing in chorus remarkably confident, with an intonation inclined to fall harshly on English ears.

There are the usual bright dresses of the women, the impressive athleticism of the men, and a general air of unquenchable high spirits. Subtleties do not belong to this high-speed entertainment, but some of the merriment, such as that of the final scene, "At the Fair," springs from exuberant horseplay.

The only surprise of the evening was the company's beginning with "God Save the Queen" in excellent English—a compliment which I found slightly embarrassing—ending with "Auld Lang Syne" and offering us in between "Three Blind Mice," "The Londonderry Air," "Ilkley Moor" and a Scottish dance performed in kilts of a dazzling Ural tartan.

For the rest there was plenty of broad bucolic humour and some extremely animated dancing, some of which suggested that the U.S.S.R. may yet claim to have been first with Rock 'n' Roll.

The ensemble of seventy performers, including half a dozen accordionists whose music served every mood, has been recruited by Honoured Art Worker Lev Christiansen from abundant young talent on the borders of Europe and Asia. Though it would be perverse to attempt any comparison of its disciplines and achievement with the artistry of the Bolshoi Ballet it is reasonable to see in the Urals Ensemble an indication of the wealth of malleable material in Russia on which the academics and choreographers can draw.

C. B. MORTLOCK



## AT THE PICTURES

Les Girls—Time Limit

BUT there can be good spectacular American musicals; yes, there can—*Funny Face* was a very good one indeed. Let us not join the pompous objectors to the choice of *Les Girls* (Director: George Cukor) for the Royal Film Performance—the pompous objectors, who would never approve of the choice of anything other than a solid, worthy British effort founded on the facts of some great naval or military occasion (and who in fact approve of almost no other kind of film at any time). And *Les Girls* has several sizeable good bits, mostly elaborate dance scenes but including also one or two very well done little episodes of straight comedy. Undeniably, however, there are several things wrong with it.

For one thing the songs and musical numbers struck me musically and other-

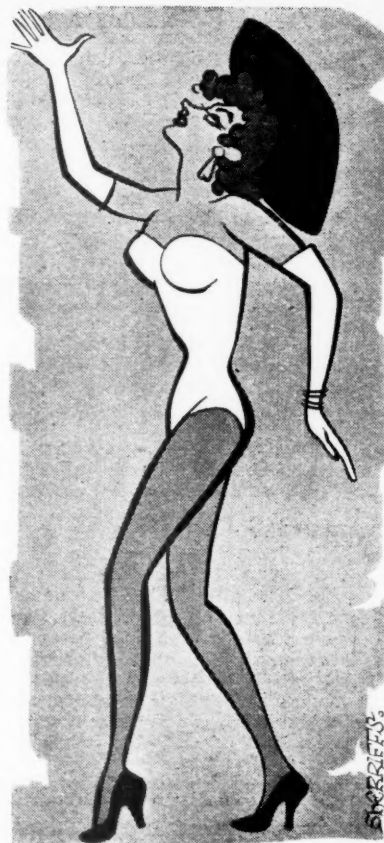
wise as pretty undistinguished; as lyricist particularly, Cole Porter seems to have been rather off the beam this time (unless—and this of course is not at all improbable—he wrote good lyrics and then was asked to weed them of all words and ideas that might not be immediately understood by teenagers). For another thing, the script is peppered, or perforated, with many very second-rate, corny and obvious dialogue cracks, some of a positively startling crudity when one considers their quite reasonably amusing context. For another thing, the main comic plot situation, several times repeated, is the not very subtle one that depends on the audience's knowing the truth about some state of affairs that one character or set of characters is desperately trying against odds to hide from another.

Nevertheless there are excellent things here. The visual impression, in the design and colour of the dance scenes, is often admirable; and by "design" I mean also *moving* design, which in effect is bound up with choreography (the dancing camera, as well as the dancers). Gene Kelly is always a pleasure to watch, and the three girls who in turn partner him, Kay Kendall, Mitzi Gaynor and Taina Elg, are most decorative and skilful. Miss Kendall in particular, though less in evidence as a dancer, has a brilliantly funny episode to herself in which the character she plays, having had too much to drink (and we won't be pompous about that, either), sees herself in the part of Carmen, complete with wavering arias and inability to sell any cigarettes.

The story, as in all musicals, is no more than an excuse and a framework for song, dance, and spectacle. The sobering thought that a good many of the audience are expected to, and will, pay some attention to it need not bother us; the thing is superficially very entertaining.

A title like *Time Limit* (Director: Karl Malden) often means a dramatically gripping story, and here is a good one. The pattern of its narrative is one that never fails to grip: it simply traces the course of a difficult investigation—the tension increasing as the odds seem to mount against the result that earlier scenes have made us wish for. This result is the justification of an apparently sympathetic character; and an extra boost is given by the time limit of the title—if the man is not justified soon, it will be too late, he is lost.

He is an officer (Richard Basehart) accused of collaborating with the enemy in a prison camp in Korea; and the Colonel examining his case (Richard Widmark), baffled and angered by his apparent determination not to defend himself, becomes obsessed with the idea of finding out the reason. There are one or two flashbacks to what happened in the camp, but most of the film, presumably like the play (by Henry Denker and



(Les Girls)

Sybil Lady Wren—KAY KENDALL

Ralph Berkey) from which it is adapted, sticks to the Colonel's office where he interviews witnesses. Question-and-answer dialogue of this sort can be absorbing (as the queues outside a law court know), and the ability of the film to show the most subtle and quiet effects of expression and speech adds immensely to its interest here. Excellently entertaining also are the details of office routine; Martin Balsam as an officious sergeant and Dolores Michaels as a secretary give memorably good performances. The whole thing is well worth while: it is intelligent, and sensible, and besides being gripping it lives in the mind.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Survey

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

In London: the outstanding tragedy *He Who Must Die* (6/11/57), René Clair's touching comedy *Porte des Lilas* (13/11/57), the splendid spectacular action piece *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (16/10/57), and the unbeatable entertainment *Around the World in Eighty Days* (17/7/57).

Three variously worth-while releases: *End as a Man* (7/8/57), *A Hatful of Rain* (2/10/57), and *Full of Life* (11/9/57).

RICHARD MALLETT

## AT THE THEATRE IN PARIS

*Le Château* (THÉÂTRE SARAH BERNHARDT)—*Spectacle Ionesco* (THÉÂTRE DE LA HUCHETTE)—*Périclès* (THÉÂTRE DE L'AMBIGU)—*Le Sexe Faible* (COMÉDIE FRANÇAISE, SALLE LUXEMBOURG)—*La Mouche Bleue* (COMÉDIE DES CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES)—*La Prétentaine* (THÉÂTRE DES AMBASSADEURS)—*Le Cœur Volant* (THÉÂTRE ANTOINE)—*Mangeront-Ils?* (THÉÂTRE DU TERTRE).

THE Paris theatre is unusually full of long runs. Ustinov's four colonels, for instance, have notched a thousand performances, and show no signs of going on half-pay, while fifteen other productions have scored between two and eight hundred. Of the normal autumn flood of new plays, many have already evaporated: the most notable victim, Barrault's production of Schéhazade's *Histoire de Vasco*, getting a tolerable press before succumbing suddenly to thunderbolts from Robert Kemp in *Le Monde* and Jean-Jacques Gauthier in *Figaro*. Unlike their colleagues here, the leading French critics are still armed with the death-sentence.

Fortunately Barrault had ready Pol Quentin's adaptation (after Max Brod) of Kafka's *Le Château*, and it is easily the most exciting piece in the present list. Inevitably some of the original's symbolism has been lost, but in fact its main point seems sharpened by compression. The production is extremely simple, alternating between the frozen wastes (for which there is polar scope at the huge Sarah Bernhardt) that isolate the castle, and the village interiors. The feeling of near rightness is brilliant; reality comes and goes like a mirage, so that for some time Joseph K., the perfectly sane little surveyor who has been engaged by the invisible hierarchy, is convinced he can start work as soon as

he has broken through the nebulous system of frustration in which he is trapped (one thinks of *The Egg*, at least in its French version, but there the system was vulnerable to cunning, whereas poor Joseph K. is up against the cosmic inaction of a rarefied bureaucracy).

Believing as he does in freedom and human dignity he cannot imagine that by humility and patience he cannot find a logical way through the defences. He falls in love with a waitress from the inn—beautifully played by Simone Valère—but it is an oddly distorted experience. In his increasingly desperate search for the arch-functionary Klam he is passed from one glib official to another with the mad sickness of Alice. Whenever he appears to be nearer, Klam becomes infinitely more remote, until, beaten, Joseph K. dies of exhaustion, and the old man sitting by murmurs, in so many words, "Terribly sad, but of course nothing can be done."

The sanity of the play's insanity is frightening. Both in his production and his performance as the surveyor Barrault holds this surrealist balance marvellously. Joseph K. is the decent little modern man caught up in runaway machinery grown far too big for human comprehension; we are all in the same boat. The play makes this point with absolute clarity, and at the same time is often very funny. Pierre Bertin's gouty mayor sitting up in



(Le Cœur Volant)

Jeanne Dieulevant—GENEVIEVE PAGE

bed expounding a rigmarole of courteous officialese while the half-witted aides make paper darts out of his files is memorable, and so is Jean Desailly as the secretary enlarging on the exquisite subtleties of bureaucracy.

The smallest theatre in Paris (ninety-seven seats—at an ambitious attempt to make this a hundred it began to collapse), the Huchette is among the safest bets for intelligence and good acting. Two of Ionesco's short pieces, *La Cantatrice Chauve* and *La Leçon*, are given in the present bill with dazzling aplomb. Both plays have appeared in London with fair success, considering the difficulties of translating language and manner, for Ionesco is a serious philosopher working through his own brand of lunatic comedy; though they still go on too long, they are made a good deal more amusing by the mimic powers and specialized nonsense of the Huchette company. *La Cantatrice*, a fantasy of irrelevant domestic conversation, demonstrates the loneliness of man and his inability to communicate even with his dearest; *La Leçon* is a hysterical satire on the futility of the higher learning. It seems unfair to pick names from so accomplished a cast, but Marcel Cuvelier, Odette Piquet, Nicolas Bataille and Pierre Frag must be mentioned.

*Périclès*, arrived in Paris for the first time with all its itinerant absurdities, is going down very well. Like Nugent Monck at Stratford, René Dupuy has lightened it as much as possible, though he keeps the cul-de-sac first act. The grand manner is carefully avoided.



Joseph K.—JEAN-LOUIS BARRAULT

(Le Château)

Speech is quiet, almost conversational; Simonides becomes a genial little king from Soglow rather than Holbein, while the hired assassin who fails to murder Pericles does everything except hiss "Psst!" Only in the brothel scenes is the drama really stepped up, with a tremendous mad-woman-of-Chaillot bawd. M. Dupuy himself makes a useful Gower, and Pericles *père, mère et fille* are confidently taken by Bruno Cremer, Francine Berge and Nelly Borgeaud; but it is the production that sticks in the mind. Visually it is very charming and innocent. The stage, clean and clear, runs back to a distant marine horizon on which Jacques Noël's little model ships cavort in an aquarium light; islands, astrolabes and other necessities being whisked from flies and wings when needed. Except that Pericles' armour is clamped on by palpable elastic over his long white winter coms, the dresses are in the spirit of a happy evening.

At the Luxembourg the Comédie Française is putting on a polished revival of Edouard Bourdet's *Le Sexe Faible*, that takes off with a mordant wit the bed-cash nexus in rich French society between the wars. In a grand country hotel an anxious dowager works tirelessly on the marriages of two spoilt sons who must be kept, and in comfort befitting their station. On the surface, a well-made, well-mannered social comedy; below it, pretty biting satire. In Jean Meyer's production the play still lives, and is capably acted. Some French critics complain that Gabrielle Dorziat is miscast as the mother, but I liked her suggestion of a more sedate Yvonne



[Le Sexe Faible]

Isabelle—GABRIELLE DORZIAT

Arnaud. The two performances, however, that outshine the rest are the superbly omniscient maître-d'hôtel, Jeeves-cum-Crichton, of Jacques Charon and the dynamic south-American gigolo of Robert Hirsch. If smoke came out of M. Hirsch's ears it would be no surprise.

Marcel Aymé's new comedy, *La Mouche Bleue*, amuses spasmodically but its attack on America's money-obsession and its gruesome attempts to shock the bourgeoisie are tiresome. The hero is a harassed little man paid to think up ideas in the sort of New York office that has "*Dieu est votre chef du personnel*" on its perspex walls. He falls for his secretary, rebels against his ambitious wife, resigns, and is finally dragged back to captivity at four times the salary. Whisky, bed, back-slapping, dollar-worship, a hooligan teenager, gadgets and commercial revivalism are all lumped together in a rather undigested mixture; curiously, TV is forgotten. Besides a number of dull characters, several are given a good comic edge, but Pierre Destailles easily leads as the little man, playing him in the manner of a more neurotic Fresnay.

Considerable dexterity is needed to build a comedy out of a young adventurer stowing away in a first-class cabin of the "Ile-de-France," and staying for the Atlantic crossing, not only with the permission of its ravishing occupant but in the utmost respectability. If Jacques Deval fails in *La Prétentaine* to squeeze the bigger laughs from this

situation, it is still neatly handled, and Françoise Christophe and Philippe Nicaud keep it lightly entertaining. The other fish which both are frying fade out as America approaches. The clinch comes only at the end, which is refreshing.

By *Le Cœur Volant*, a bogus romantic-historical, I was not for a moment persuaded. Claude-André Puget must have had one eye on the more moronic corner of Hollywood in writing of his Saint-Malo beauty (date, 1666), loved by two handsome buccaneers whose pitch is queered by a preposterous custom of sharing everything in common, even wives. One is asked to believe that this problem is something new in a port teeming with amorous filibusters. The characters are alarmingly simple-minded. In colour, on a wide screen, their flirtations and rows and perplexities could be slept through more comfortably. For several scenes the greater part of a whole brig is quite unhelpfully on the stage. Geneviève Page, René Arrieu and Jean Claudio are brave, but sadly wasted.

An evening at the Théâtre du Tertre, on the butte of Montmartre, will certainly be remembered, not so much for *Mangeront-Ils?*, a flamboyant verse-fantasy by Victor Hugo perhaps in its final revival but because twenty minutes after the advertised time for starting we were the sole audience. A rare theatrical experience seemed in the bag, when we were joined by twelve others, and thus seriously outnumbered a cast which delivered Hugo's gargantuan speeches with undaunted verve. ERIC KEOWN



[La Mouche Bleue]

James Dee—PIERRE DESTAILLES



[La Leçon]

Le Professeur—MARCEL CUEVELIER





## ON THE AIR Channel Tunnel Nine

**SIR IVONE KIRKPATRICK**, who now replaces Sir Kenneth Clark as chairman of the Independent Television Authority, has a distinguished record as a diplomat and administrator. During the war he guided the B.B.C.'s European services with conspicuous success, and more recently he made a hit as a speaker in sound and television programmes. Moreover, as the papers have been quick to discover, he owns a TV set.

Sir Ivone is no sinecurist, and it is unlikely that he will interpret the authority vested in him (by one of the most extraordinary and unsatisfactory of legislative acts) merely as that of guide, philosopher and friend. It was never intended that commercial TV should be left free to compete with the B.B.C.'s sound and vision programmes on its own terms and at its own level. Most of its advocates wanted competition all along the line, and they did not envisage the possibility of the whole carefully constructed pattern of broadcasting being destroyed by a handful of speculative and privileged programme contractors.

There is no disagreement with the general thesis that the public should get what it wants in entertainment. The trouble with the I.T.A. is that it serves up only what a large part of the public *prefers*. Sir Ivone has said "If you get to the state where you regard the rating as the only thing in life, that is dangerous," and I take this to mean that a successful rating can be achieved without reference to qualitative satisfaction.



[The Future of Communism]  
CHRISTOPHER MAYHEW

The most discouraging fact about the I.T.A.'s first two years of operations is the early onset of stagnation: the formula for rating success was found very quickly . . . and that was that. Granada apart, the contractors have been content to sit back and let the films and quiz programmes roll. There has been practically no experimental work, no attempt to find out whether what the public prefers could be improved. As Mr. Macmillan says, they have never had it so good.

There has been so much news about Russia and her sputniks during the last week or so that the steady viewer has difficulty in compartmentalizing (what a word!) the rush of film and comment. I have seen the Kremlin scores of times, also Lenin's tomb, the tanks and rockets in Red Square, that celebrated department store, the women road-sweepers, the peasants of Georgia and Tashkent . . .

And I have heard Russia explained in a fascinating assortment of broken English.

More than any other programme on Russia I enjoyed the first of Christopher Mayhew's bites at "The Future of Communism." Mayhew is an earnest, thrusting and persuasive lecturer, desperately anxious to put over his major points and—at times—agonizingly persistent in his declarations of impartiality. His picture of the Soviet Union was broad, colourful and convincing in its perspective. Very wisely and usefully he contrasted the scientific and engineering glories of Khrushchev's front window with the squalor of the back-room, the totalitarian rationalism of the party line with the apparently ineradicable mysticism of

Mother Russia. A very good programme, efficiently produced by Charles Wheeler.

Turning to sound radio I should like to recommend a Home Service series of eight programmes by Alan Lomax on the folk music of Britain. Lomax's new journey into song is even more rewarding than his jazz quest in America. Do not be put off by the title "A Ballad-hunter Looks at Britain."

What emerges from these programmes is that our musical heritage is wonderfully rich, that the working songs, ploughboy ballads, dances and glees of the unsophisticated country folk (the people, that is, whose native music has not been drowned by the Tin Pan Alley of the towns) could become a treasure chest of revivalist melody and rhythms.

If you are tired of imported musical slang get a load of Wessex wassail or Norfolk rock. It gives.

BERNARD HOLLOWOOD



COPYRIGHT © 1957 by Bradbury, Agnew & Company, Limited. All rights of reproduction are reserved in respect of all articles, sketches, drawings, etc., published in PUNCH in all parts of the world. Reproductions or imitations of any of these are therefore expressly forbidden. The Proprietors will always consider requests for permission to reprint. Editorial contributions requiring an answer should be accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope. CONDITIONS OF SALE AND SUPPLY.—This periodical is sold subject to the following conditions, namely, that it shall not be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of in a mutilated condition or in any unauthorized cover by way of Trade, except at the full retail price of 9d.; and that it shall not be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of in any publication or advertising, literary or pictorial matter whatsoever.

Reg'd at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper. Entered as 2nd-class Mail Matter at the New York, N.Y., P.O. 1903. Postage of this issue: Gt. Britain and Eire 1d.; Canada 1d.; Elsewhere Overseas 4d. Mark Wrapper top left-hand corner "Canadian Magazine Post" "Printed Papers—Reduced Rate."

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION RATES: (Including all Special and Extra Numbers and Postage).

Great Britain and Eire £2.16.0; Canada (by Canadian Magazine Post) £2.10.0 (\$7.25); Elsewhere Overseas £3.0.0 (U.S.A. \$9.00).

U.S.A. and Canadian readers may remit by cheques on their own Banks. Other Overseas readers should consult their Bankers or remit by Postal Money Order.

For prompt service please send orders by Air Mail to PUNCH, 10 Boulevard Street, Fleet Street, London, E.C.4, England.



ex-  
sort-

pro-  
oyed  
May-  
re of  
is an  
per-  
rately  
major  
oniz-  
elara-  
His  
Union  
con-  
ective.  
ly he  
and  
rush-  
h the  
n, the  
of the  
rently  
of  
mme,  
eeler.  
like to  
eight  
e folk  
urney  
than  
not be  
hunter

mme  
erfully  
ghboy  
e un-  
people,  
t been  
of the  
nest of

musical  
sail or

OOD

CH in all  
reprint  
d subject  
y way of  
cover by

